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Committee of Experts on Public Administration
Third session
New York, 29 March-2 April 2004
Item 2 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

3. Revitalizing public administration.

Documentation

The Secretariat will submit a paper providing an overview of the topic of revitalizing public administration as a strategic action for sustainable human development. It will also submit three papers on the following more specific topics:

(a) Role of human resources in revitalizing public administration;

(b) Role of the public sector in advancing the knowledge society;

(c) Strengthening public administration for the Millennium Development Goals: a partnership-building approach.

4. Public-sector institutional capacity for African renewal.

Documentation

The Secretariat will submit a paper on the institutional development of governance and public administration in Africa.

5. Analysis of existing basic data on the public sector.

Documentation

The Secretariat will submit a paper on the analysis of the existing basic data on the public sector.

6. Review of United Nations activities in the area of public administration.

04-21158 (E) 300104

Documentation

The Secretariat will:

(a) Make a presentation on the general trends of United Nations activities in the area of public administration for the review and guidance of the Committee;

(b) Provide the Committee for its consideration a note by the Secretary-General on the preparation of a strategic framework for the period 2006-2007. In this connection, attention is drawn to General Assembly resolution 58/269, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-ninth session a strategic framework for the biennium 2006-2007, comprising part one: a plan outline, reflecting the longer-term objectives of the Organization, and part two: a biennial programme plan, to cover two years, to replace the current medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005.

7. Proposed programme of work and agenda for the next session of the Committee of Experts.

The Committee will review its programme of work and make recommendations to the Economic and Social Council on the agenda for its fourth session.

United Nations E/C.16/2004/2

Economic and Social Council

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Committee of Experts on Public Administration
Third session
New York, 29 March-2 April 2004
Agenda item 3
Revitalizing public administration

Revitalizing public administration as a strategic action for sustainable human development: an overview

Report of the Secretariat*

Summary

Public administration is often seen as a set of State institutions, processes, procedures, systems and organizational structures, practices and behaviour for managing public affairs to serve the public interest. However, since the latter part of the 1970s, the meaning of public administration has gradually become diluted, giving way to the concept of public management.

Since that time, initiatives for public sector reform geared towards introducing and popularizing management approaches and methods of private sector enterprises have been undertaken in many countries, paving the way for a modified concept of public administration known as public management, which puts emphasis on issues of effectiveness, efficiency, economy, deregulation, client orientation and rolling back the frontiers of the State.

After more than 20 years of public sector reform, the results of public management have been mixed. It is increasingly suspected that the emphasis put on market forces and deregulation, as well as on efficiency and savings in the public sector, may have had a negative impact on the traditional mandate of the State, leading to irregularities, including inadequate protection of the vulnerable in the provision of public services such as health and education, and causing lapses in the management of issues related to State security. In being overly eager to adopt the management behaviour of private enterprise, the public sector may have lost touch

* The present report is being submitted late due to late responses from members of the Committee.

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with its responsibility to the general public interest in a number of respects. In this context, the concept of governance has gained increasing respect because of its focus on participation, people's interest, equity, transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs. However, public administration still needs new life in order to refocus its efforts in the management of public affairs on the critical missions of the State as well as on guaranteeing the general public interest.

During the Committee's second session in April 2003, it was recommended that, given that revitalizing and revalidating public administration to enable the State to perform its changing role was an overarching priority, it should be the focus of the Committee's discussion at future meetings.[a] There is need to find out how to revitalize public administration to enable it to play its critical and central role in providing fundamental guarantees, such as ensuring peace and security, the rule of law and the protection of individual life and property, as well as its catalyst role in sustainable human development.

This presentation does not negate either public management or governance concepts, but rethinks public administration, public management and governance with a view to constructing a renewed conceptual basis for revitalizing public administration. Below are some concepts that may emerge as benchmarks in revitalizing public administration:

- Redefining and reaffirming the fundamental missions of the State, including its role in ensuring peace, security and stability and the rule of law and order, as well as creating a sustainable environment conducive to individual and private sector initiative and economic growth and human development;
- Developing and sustaining partnerships and collaboration among the institutions of the public sector, civil society and the private sector;
- Promoting cooperation among institutions of the State and public administration in different countries in order to facilitate the exchange of successful experiences in renewing public administration;
- Selectively integrating principles and practices of public management and governance in public administration so as to build and promote public administration systems that are efficient, economic and effective as well as participative, responsive, equitable and accountable to the public;
- Instilling, within the sphere of public administration, structures and a culture of research, including the application of new information and communication technologies which can play a critical role in giving new life to public administration;
- Encouraging the attraction, recruitment and retention of the best human resources in the public sector.

During its third session, the Committee will discuss issues relating to the revitalization of public administration focusing on: developing institutions of governance and public administration in Africa; enhancing human capital; the role of human resources in revitalizing public administration; promoting shared and engaged governance; and encouraging the growth and proper governance of an information and knowledge society.

Revitalizing public administration will need further exploration, discussion and proposals from the Committee. The following issues need to be focused on in future meetings of the Committee:

(a) Redefinition and reaffirmation of the role of the State in public policy;

(b) Public service transparency, accountability, professionalism, ethics and integrity;

(c) Innovations in governance and public administration;

(d) Building effective combinations of decentralization and centralization policies and promoting the evaluation of decentralization policies.

[a] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 44* (E/2003/44), chap. IV, para. 3.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 50/225 on public administration and development, the General Assembly emphasized the critical role of sound public administration in the process of development. This same view has since been reiterated in various forums, spurring efforts at global, regional and national levels to strengthen the capacities of public administration to enable it to support efforts of poverty reduction and sustainable human development. However, despite the emphasis demonstrated at the highest levels, there are still conceptual and practical ambiguities indicating that public administration needs to be revitalized to play an effective enabling and catalytic role on the development process. At its meeting in July 2003, the Committee of Experts on Public Administration highlighted the need to focus on the issue of how to revitalize public administration to provide effective support to poverty reduction efforts and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The present paper gives an overview of activities in this field and serves as a preamble to the four other presentations on this subject: "Strengthening public administration for the Millennium Development Goals: a partnership building approach" (E/C.16/2004/5), "The role of the public sector in advancing the knowledge society" (E/C.16/2004/4), "Developing institutions of governance and public administration in Africa" (E/C.16/2004/6), and the "role of human resources in revitalizing public administration" (E/C.16/2004/3).

II. Public administration, public management and good governance: conceptual mutations and cumulative paradigm shifts

2. In order to have a common understanding of why there is a need to discuss the subject of revitalizing public administration, one has to understand the thought processes that have shaped the current conceptual context. In the recent trend of thinking and discourse on managing public affairs, there has been a cumulative paradigm movement away from public administration and towards governance via public management. While it is clear that, following these trends and paradigm shifts, there have been complementarities among the three concepts and practices (public administration, public management and governance), there have been losses as well as gains for public administration as an institution, a structural organization, a set of practices and a domain of values and principles through which the State prepares, makes, implements, monitors, controls and evaluates its decisions and policies as well as its performance of the full range of its functions, including the delivery of services that are critical to human development.

3. Public administration, as a bureaucratic organization, is conceived to work within a set of rules with legitimate, delegated, legal-rational authority, expertise, impartiality, continuity, speed and accuracy, predictability, standardization, integrity and professionalism in order to satisfy the general public interest. As an instrument of the State,[1] it is expected to provide the fundamental bases of human development and security, including freedom of the individual, protection of life and property, justice, protection of basic human rights, stability and peaceful resolution of conflict, whether in allocation and distribution of resources or otherwise. In this light, effective public administration is indispensable for the sustainability of the rule of law.

4. However, from the latter part of the 1970s, public administration has attracted considerable criticism from those advocating a more prominent role for private enterprise in development. Such criticism highlighted public administration practices, which were characterized, inter alia, by red tape, sluggishness, insensitivity to public needs, wasteful utilization of public resources and undue focus on process and procedure rather than on results, and negatively viewed the whole instrument of the State (public administration) as a big burden on the tax payer. A school of thought emerged that believed that the direction of public affairs would best be performed by the application of the management principles and practices of private enterprise, which pay particular attention to efficiency and economy in the utilization of resources, effectiveness, customer focus and reliance on market forces especially in matters of economic decision-making. Increasing the role and influence of the private sector called for rolling back the frontiers of the State, in effect pushing for minimizing the size of the public sector and narrowing the field of operation of public administration. Instead of public administration the common term used was public management.

5. In the 1990s, the negative effect of undue emphasis on efficiency and economy in the running of public affairs started to manifest itself in the deterioration of the delivery of public services especially those closely linked to the satisfaction of the general public interest, which could be referred to as public goods. Such goods and services could not be adequately provided through strict adherence to the practices and dictates of market forces. Where the public administrator had paid too much attention to the rules, regulations, controls, procedures and processes at the expense of providing effective services to the public, the public manager placed excessive focus on efficiency and economy in the utilization of resources, again to the detriment of service to the citizen. Lapses in regulation and controls provided avenues for increased corruption in public offices and private sector practices in the management of human resources (such as contracting), eroded the commitment to public service values and favoured employment rather than career development in many countries. Ultimately the public did not get the satisfaction expected. It became apparent that there was a great difference between market forces and public interest and that market forces did not necessarily always decide in favour of the public interest. In addition, the public was not always called in to participate in deciding, planning, monitoring and evaluating government actions to ensure that the interest of the public remained at the centre of government action.

6. In the search for a stronger say and a stronger role for the citizen in influencing the way public managers planned and implemented the functioning of the State with equity, transparency and accountability, a concept of governance emerged that emphasized the participation and interest of the public as well as the strong accountability of public officials in control of public management. That concept of "good governance" introduced the important elements of partnerships and shared accountability whereby various stakeholders in the public, private and civil society sectors at local, national, regional and global levels would come together to work as a team to manage public affairs as part of the development process.

III. Integrating public management and good governance to revitalize public administration as the core mechanism for service delivery

7. In view of the above synopsis of the trends and conceptual mutations in the field of public administration, the question of what revitalizing public administration entails and what a revitalized public administration looks like needs to be considered with a critical eye. For instance, there is the question of nomenclature that has yet to be sorted out:

> "It is clear that a lot will have to be done to make public administration an efficient, effective, responsive, transparent and accountable instrument for public policy, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and overall sustainable development. One extra problem for formulators of policies, strategies and programmes for strengthening public administration in post-conflict countries concerns which basic concept is to be followed (building, re-building, reconstructing, reforming, rehabilitating, transformation, reconfiguring, or re-engineering?)."[2]

In any discussion of revitalizing public administration, the new meaning the term "revitalization" brings to the paradigm of expressions of making public administration a sharper instrument of State action must be considered.

8. If it is understood that to revitalize means to imbue with new life and vitality, then the introduction of "New Public Management" and the emphasis currently put on good governance are part and parcel of efforts to give new life to public administration. One could, however, take the view that the introduction of New Public Management and the zeal with which the concept of good governance is advocated constitute forces that have negated and eroded public administration in its adherence to impartial rule application and regulatory control, as well as its observance of the value of public service within the principles of continuity, expertise and predictability.

9. The midpoint position would be more positive and beneficial to the process of giving new life to public administration for effective public service and performance of the core functions of the State. Conceptually, public administration constitutes the crust of public management as well as of good governance. The fault in the trends outlined above lies in the fact that those who advocate New Public Management as well as those who advocate good governance perceive public administration as something apart from either concept. A closer analysis shows that without proper public administration, neither concept can be effective. It is this central position of public administration that needs to be refocused and repositioned in the process of revitalizing public administration. What needs to be done is to determine exactly what revitalizing public administration entails.

10. First, there is a need to recognize, accept and reaffirm the central position of public administration as a vital determinant in the practice of public management and good governance. Second, the central position occupied by public administration and the core functions it must carry out have to be redefined, focusing on those functions that would be jeopardized if left to the private sector or civil society. Such functions include justice and security, regulatory control, as well as the delivery of services critical to the process of human development, such as

education, health and environmental protection. It is clear that an overstretched public administration carrying out functions that can best be executed by the private sector or civil society will hardly be effective.

11. However, and this is the third facet in the process of revitalizing public administration, if the practice of public administration is to be given new life, it must not retreat to its archaic role of exclusive regulatory control and its paternalistic and monopolistic approach to service delivery. Public administration must recognize the value and virtue of partnerships among the various sectors, cooperating with actors in the private and civil society sectors at local, national, regional and global levels to galvanize experience, knowledge, skills and to utilize resources for effective response to public needs. Partnerships constitute a major component of the process of giving new life to public administration. The revitalization of public administration entails bringing together the best attributes of the three concepts (public administration, public management and good governance) to construct a sharp instrument for effective, efficient, responsive, transparent and accountable functioning of the State. In a general way, a revitalized public administration, including its institutions, structures, systems, procedures, processes, networks, relationships, practices, approaches and methods of work, as well as leadership behaviour, should be effective, efficient, economic, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive to the needs of the public and should embrace the participation of a broad spectrum of stakeholders and actors in all sectors at all levels. In addition, the key position of a revitalized public administration as a critical and determining actor in the process of human development must be recognized and valued. The significance of the central, anchoring role of public administration is recognized even by those who have been working on "political" and/or "democratic" governance, and it is acknowledged that the existence of political institutions (such as electoral management bodies, parliaments, human rights institutions, etc.) does not ensure access to services by the public if the mechanisms of public administration for the planning and delivery of services are not streamlined.

IV. Revitalizing public administration: a purposeful and context-sensitive strategic action

12. While every State requires public administration as an instrument for its functioning, the context within which it needs to be revitalized and the purpose for which such revitalization is conceived and actualized must determine the shape and character it adopts. This process calls for a thorough situational and contextual analysis to gain a full grasp of the internal and external environmental factors militating for or constraining revitalization, as well as of the institutional capacities required to effect it. Blanket or ready-made measures to reform public administration are not the best suited for revitalization. For example, public administration in developed countries may be revitalized in order to manage and sustain national wealth for the maximum benefit of the citizenry, while the revitalization of public administration in developing countries may have the ultimate purpose of alleviating poverty and creating conducive conditions for sustainable human development. In such different situations, one would not expect public administration systems to have synonymous missions or structures, even if one might expect similarities in basic principles and values.

13. The purpose of revitalizing public administration can be expressed at three different levels: the global level, in the form of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals; the regional level, for example in the form of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); and the national level, in the form of national development strategies. The critical point is that revitalizing public administration for its own sake is not a very profitable endeavour. Whether within the context of developing or developed countries, the revitalization of governance and public administration, including strengthening leadership, is carried out in order to achieve sustainable development, improve the lives of people living in poverty, reverse the continuous degradation of the global environment and surmount the particular challenges now facing the world. One of the global challenges is how to achieve the United Nations Millennium Goals. Briefly these are:

- Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger
- Achievement of universal primary education
- Promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women
- Improvement of maternal health
- Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensuring environmental sustainability
- Development of a global partnership for development

14. At the global level, public administration is the anchor of successful achievement of the above-cited Millennium Development Goals. First, the values and principles (human dignity, equality, equity, freedom, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility) that Member States of the United Nations reiterated in General Assembly resolution 55/2, which spells out the Millennium Development Goals, cannot possibly be promoted and upheld without effective public administration institutions. The collaborative and cooperative action of civil society and private sector institutions at all levels are clearly necessary in this process, but they are supplementary to the core mission and function of public administration as the guarantor of the general interest. In addition, the ambitious scope of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals quoted above needs effective public administration for their achievement, in particular through the adoption of appropriate and effective policies, strategies and programmes as well as the provision of the necessary leadership and resources for implementation. At the regional level, efforts to foster sustainable human development and poverty reduction will not bear fruit without effective public administration at the national level. Here, the example of NEPAD, which focuses on strengthening good governance and public administration as a critical ingredient in the implementation of the entire programme is illustrative.

15. At the national level, the case of Rwanda illustrates this point. Rwanda's efforts to revitalize its public administration included the writing of a new constitution to guide sustained response to the needs of the population. Explaining how this was done, the text of the preamble to the national constitution states:

> "In order to elaborate a Constitution that would respond to the expectations of the population and be attuned to the socio-political context of the country, the legal and Constitutional Commission opted for a participatory and inclusive

> approach that would ensure full participation of the population. A plan of consultation was prepared to this effect. The latter was supposed to provide Rwandans with a forum where they could easily express their ideas and to facilitate the exploitation and the processing of the information gathered ... It is important to point out that besides specific themes of most classical constitutions, some typical aspects of the Rwandan context were deeply debated in order to come up with principles to integrate into the new Constitution. These are, namely: positive values in the Rwandan culture and mechanisms to promote the effective enjoyment of rights and freedoms, the protection of disadvantaged people in the community, the positive experience from the transition such as decentralization, Gacaca jurisdictions, etc.".[3]

16. It is clear from the above that Rwanda did not leave the constitution-making exercise to eminent legal experts or insiders from the existing public administration system but rather opened up to inputs from all stakeholders in order to tailor the constitution to the needs of the entire country. What emerges from these global regional and national examples is that effective public administration is indispensable to the process of human development.

V. Revitalizing public administration: engaged participatory and inclusive governance

17. One aspect of public administration that needs to be in tune with current aspirations of the public concerns how public administration systems (including institutions, structures, laws, processes, procedures and public policies) are established in each country. Traditionally, the design of public administration has been left to experts (in law, politics, policy, organizational design, public administration and so forth). This has had the tendency of putting the public at the receiving end of public administration, a passive recipient or, in come cases, a latecomer to its operations, brought in to provide some support and legitimacy for policies already decided on. What is needed now is to directly engage the public not only in the act of public administration but also in its final design, as well as in monitoring and evaluating its achievements. These issues are all related to transparency, accountability and engaged governance. The universalism built into traditional systems of public administration is in disharmony with the understanding and requirements of engaged governance. Traditional public administration took the concept of the public to mean one universal public, while it is now accepted that there are various "publics", which reflect specific situations and needs.

> "The word 'public' often seems to be a synonym for 'universal'. But we are not just public administrators; we are also administrators of various 'publics', in the form of communities, neighbourhoods, interest groups and a wide variety of wildly diverging but very concrete citizens, residents, persons. And it is the reality of these diverse publics that makes the application of universals difficult."[4]

18. Whether public administration is operating at the global, regional, national or local community levels, the multitude of public interests and needs that have to be satisfied in a complex variety of ways make it highly desirable that there be a close engagement, involvement and participation of the various "publics" in the identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public

administration. The process of revitalizing public administration itself should adopt the same engagement and participatory approaches. The Ibero-American Charter for the Public Service, adopted at the fifth Ibero-American Conference of Ministers for Public Administration and State Reform, also makes this strong point:

> "Various national experiences have shown how advisable and even necessary it is for the design and implementation of public administration reform and modernization policies in Ibero-American countries to be rooted in decision-making processes that secure majority support or socio-political consensus. This would ensure that such policies are institutionally viable and sustainable. It has been noted that decisions concerning public administration reform or modernization policies are often dictated by critical circumstances that, in and of themselves, make it actually inevitable, given the very short response times, to opt for the alternative of building consensus or garnering broad-based support.
>
> "In the light of the foregoing, Governments and policy makers and opinion leaders should anticipate the need for such reform and modernization policies and take the time to create propitious conditions for their adoption through consensus building or inclusive decision-making."[5]

19. The same spirit and emphasis on the need for participation and consultation is embedded in the Charter for the Public Service in Africa in the following terms:

> "It shall be the responsibility of the administration to ensure that mechanisms of participation and consultation involving civil society and other stakeholders are effectively put in place through consultative forums or advisory bodies."[6]

20. A revitalized public administration should be built on, and should contribute to, the process of interaction between three types of actors from: Government; civil society; and the private sector. Fostering interaction among these actors is the essence of governance and effective public administration today. It is through the engagement and participation of various "publics" that exclusion from decision-making with regard to the provision of public services will be avoided, or at least minimized, and the spirit of serving the public recaptured and revalorized.

VI. Revitalizing public administration: recapturing and revalorizing values and principles of public service

21. Public administration will acquire renewed vitality by demonstrating its relevance in a given context. As global, regional and national conditions currently stand, public administration will be upheld in value if it makes a visible positive contribution in the fields of poverty reduction and sustainable human development, not only through ensuring a conducive environment for key players in the private and civil society sectors to operate without hindrance, but also through visibly planning and providing essential public services, such as education and health, without which poverty reduction and sustainable human development cannot be achieved. It is in the provision of essential services and in executing regulatory control functions that public administration makes direct interface with civil society at large, and it is there that it should prove its relevance, in particular through the application of the principles and upholding values of public service.

22. The Charter for the Public Service in Africa emphasizes the principles of equality of treatment, neutrality, legality and continuity. It equally stipulates proximity and accessibility of service, participation, consultation and mediation, quality, effectiveness and efficiency, evaluation of services, transparency and information, speed and responsiveness, reliability and confidentiality of information concerning citizens, professionalism, ethics and integrity and moral rectitude, as critical aspects of public service on the continent. Revitalizing public administration in regions where there has been participative thinking concerning the subject at a political level should entail sustained implementation of commitments such as the ones expressed in both charters quoted above.

VII. Revitalizing public administration: reforming and realigning institutions and human resources

23. Principles and values, however noble, cannot be effectively applied within an inappropriate institutional set-up. The process of revitalizing public administration must therefore include setting up or reforming institutions to enable them to perform effectively. In addition, revitalized institutions of public administration must be staffed by capable personnel with adequate knowledge, skills, attitude and networks to confront the challenges facing public administration in a sustainable manner. This implies that revitalizing public administration must equally concern uplifting the capacity of human resources in the public sector. A revitalized public administration must be capable of building up, strengthening and appropriately utilizing human capital. Renewed institutions, together with their human resources, must be capable of embracing partnership with other stakeholders and key players in the private sector and civil society to facilitate the practice of engaged or shared governance.

24. Engaged governance requires participation, transparency, information and the capacity for knowledge-sharing as well as flexibility and ability in order to adapt to new thinking within the information society. It is expected that a revitalized public administration will embrace and master the tenets of creating and managing a knowledge society, while at the same time ensuring that the entire public administration adopts attributes of a learning organization in order to catalyse and respond to change and cope with the challenges and opportunities of globalization. This means that a revitalized public administration is one that contributes to the development of, and benefits from, a knowledge society. In this regard, the relationship of public administration with a knowledge society is two-pronged: on one hand, it must deal with how a knowledge society contributes to the ability of public administration to perform new roles in the context of paradigm shifts; and on the other, it needs to be a facilitating factor in creating a knowledge society. This dual relationship is a strong aspect of what is increasingly being recognized as the challenges of governing the information society.

VIII. Conclusion

25. **The presentation takes revitalizing public administration as a critical ingredient in the process of achieving the Millennium Development Goals and reducing poverty. Conceptually, the introduction of public management and good governance as concepts of managing public affairs are seen to be part and**

parcel of an ongoing process of giving public administration a new life. At this point, a search for public administration revitalization should integrate the three concepts of public administration, public management and good governance, while recognizing that public administration, because of its emphasis on the general public interest and the higher missions of the State, lies at the centre. A revitalized public administration will give vibrancy to the interaction among the various actors in the public, private and civil society sectors to encourage effective participation and collaboration in the process of human development, encouraging transparency and accountability. Without effective public administration, the threads that bring together the efforts of all these actors will weaken, common efforts will become disorganized, and there will be undue emphasis on individual survival to the detriment of the general interest. This is likely to breed corruption and widespread unethical behaviour, lack of integrity in the management of public affairs, inadequate regulatory action, which may lead to increased criminal activity and insecurity, as well as unplanned development, which will leave the vulnerable, including children and the disabled, without proper support, increasing poverty. Public administration as an instrument of State action and the guarantor of the general interest should be revitalized to champion the ongoing efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

26. During the Committee's second session in April 2003, it was recommended that since revitalizing and revalidating public administration to enable the State to perform its changing role was an overarching priority, it should be the focus of the Committee's discussion at future meetings.[7] The Committee will therefore discuss, during its current session, issues related to the revitalization of public administration focusing on: developing institutions of governance and public administration in Africa; enhancing human capital; the role of human resources in revitalizing public administration; promoting shared and engaged governance; and encouraging the growth and proper governance of an information and knowledge society.

27. Revitalizing public administration will need further exploration, discussion and proposals from the Committee. The following issues need to be examined at future meetings of the Committee:

(a) Redefinition and reaffirmation of the role of the State in public policy and socio-economic development:

Within the current general understanding of the necessity of partnerships and collaborative and participatory governance in the process of human development and poverty reduction, there is need to redefine and reaffirm the role of the State vis-à-vis that of the private sector and civil society. A number of questions surrounding this issue need to be addressed, including the following: (i) is the role of the State universal or will it change following particular circumstances of a given country? (ii) are there experiences in some countries in redefining and reaffirming the role of the State that can be shared to provide inputs in formulating frameworks for redefining and reaffirming the missions of the State? (iii) through what approaches and using what methods should the redefinition and reaffirmation of the role of the State be carried out? (iv) who should bear the overall responsibility of redefining and reaffirming the role of the State?

(b) **Repositioning and reorganizing the public service to embrace the principles of good governance, partnership, transparency, accountability, professionalism, ethics and integrity:**

One of the issues that needs to be addressed in revitalizing public administration is how to reposition it as a partnering institution to enhance capacity in inclusive decision-making. An inclusive public administration is also expected to be a more transparent, accountable and trustworthy institution. What is important is that reform in public administration must be viewed within the overall principles of "good governance". Partnerships, a critical aspect of "good governance", need to be seen as key tools of development management and as accountable institutional frameworks dedicated to the common goals of poverty reduction and sustainable human development. Typically, government/non-government partnership initiatives tend to be area-based or issue-specific, with discrete (and often short-term) time frames, owing to which, the establishment of accountability frameworks, the development of partner capacity and the conduct of evaluations that could attest to the contribution of partnerships to long-term strategic goals are often not completed. Therefore, when considering partnerships as a tool of good governance and as a framework for informed and inclusive decision-making, issues of institutional adjustments, procedural changes (including, where necessary, securing legislative mandates) and capacity-building for all partnering institutions must be carefully thought through.

(c) **Innovations in governance and public administration:**

Revitalizing public administration needs to be approached with an innovative spirit to avoid reverting to the archaic methods used in traditional approaches. In many instances, it will be necessary to study specifications in order to propose appropriate innovative public administration measures, while in other situations it will be possible to apply innovations that have been tested and proved workable and successful elsewhere. However, the sharing of existing innovations in public administration, as well as their transferability and applicability, will need to be carefully examined to avoid the transfer of innovations that will not work.

(d) **Building effective combinations of decentralization and centralization policies to promote people-centred development:**

Decentralized governance is being promoted in a number of countries because it is believed that it provides a structural arrangement through which grass-roots populations and communities, with support from other national, regional and international actors, can participate in the fight against poverty. However, decentralization may not be taken as the key to the solution to all problems of development. An appropriate mix of centralization and decentralization needs to be created, taking into account the specific circumstances and capacities of all stakeholders involved. A series of questions must be addressed, some of them critical, including: (i) what objectives should be pursued in decentralizing? (ii) what forms of decentralization are suitable for what circumstances? (iii) what are the various capacities that need to be developed in order to have effective decentralization? (iv) in highly centralized Governments, what approaches and methods can support effective initiation, formulation and implementation of the decentralization policy? and (v) what

experiences worldwide can be shared to inform the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of decentralization policies?

Notes

[1] See Jean-Louis Quermonne, *L'appareil administrative de l'Etat* (Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1991).

[2] See John-Mary Kauzya: "Approaches, processes, and methodologies for reconstructing governance and public administration in post-conflict countries: selected cases from the experience of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in Africa", presented during the Ad hoc expert group meeting on anchoring peace: reconstructing governance and public administration for peaceful, sustainable development organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in Yaoundé, Cameroon, 14 and 15 July 2003.

[3] See http://www.embarwanda-china/constitution.htm.

[4] See F. Neil Brady, "'Publics' Administration and the Ethics of Particularity", in *Public Administration Review*, September/October 2003, vol. 63, No. 5.

[5] See A/58/193, annex II, paras. 1 and 2.

[6] See article 9 of the Charter for the Public Service in Africa, adopted at the Third Pan-African Conference of Civil Service Ministers, held in Windhoek on 5 and 6 February 2001.

[7] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 44* (E/2003/44), chap. IV, para. 3.

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Revitalizing public administration

Role of human resources in revitalizing public administration

Report of the Secretariat

Summary

People are the lifeblood of any organization and the agents of reform and renewal in public administration. The knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of public servants are at the heart of State performance. The revitalization of public administration, however, must be seen from a holistic perspective. For example, the training of individuals cannot be isolated from the performance expectations of a specific function or position. Performance and human resources development plans for staff cannot be separated from the goals and service objectives of the employing organization, and goals and organizational structure cannot be disconnected from an understanding of the policy framework, including demand for services from the respective citizens. At the same time, the goals, priorities and performance objectives of an organization cannot be determined outside the broader national and government policy agenda and macro-socio-economic framework.

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Political leadership is the prime mover in bringing about alignment between capacity-building efforts of the public administration system and national development goals. Without effective and determined leadership, it is difficult to revitalize public administration in any country. While the importance of developing sound policy and institutional frameworks for revitalizing public administration cannot be overemphasized, it is leadership that primarily drives the change process. A major weakness of many public sector reform programmes, in fact, has been the lack of genuine leadership commitment to those efforts. These ingredients, policy and institutional reform and leadership commitment, are therefore essential prerequisites for the formulation of a strategy to strengthen the capacity of human capital in order to revitalize public administration at the national level. The present report stresses that reform of public administration is a long-term process, requiring the adoption of a comprehensive strategy that fosters the development of core capacities to provide leadership; to formulate sound public policies; to foster greater performance-orientation in service delivery; and to enhance professionalism in public management.

I. Introduction

1. At its first session in July 2002, the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (UNCEPA) identified six priority areas in which Member States could build their capacity to implement the Millennium Declaration, including: "the public sector must develop a strategy to recruit and retain its fair share of the best talent".[1] That key issue was extensively discussed at the Second Session of UNCEPA in April 2003, which concluded, "that revitalizing and revalidating public administration to enable the State to perform its changing role and to better serve citizens was an overarching priority for all countries".[2] Moreover, the Committee at its Second Session "stressed that human resources capacity was critical to the quality of public administration. Indeed, the increasing complexity of both policy-making and administrative processes, as well as the erosion of human resources capacity to carry out those core functions, is making it difficult for many Member States to implement the goals of reducing poverty and promoting sustainable human development, as emphasized in the Millennium Development Goals".[3]

2. The present report asserts that the realization of national development goals is largely determined by the quality of the human resources in the public sector. The importance of following a holistic and home-grown approach to capacity development is particularly emphasized, if Governments are to be able to create a "virtuous circle" where investments in human capital will help to revitalize public administration at the country level. The review of the critical issues underpinning the role of human resources in transforming the quality of public administration is guided by the following set of questions:

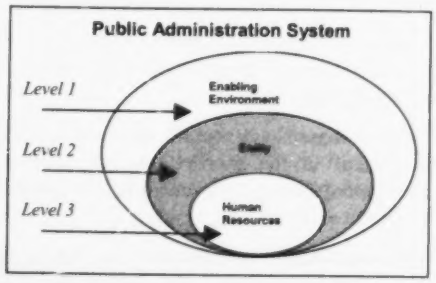
- What are the main causes of erosion in human resources capacities in the public sector and how can these challenges be most effectively addressed?
- While educational and professional qualifications of senior civil servants in most developing countries have increased dramatically during the past two decades, why has there not been a commensurate improvement in the quality of public administration, including service delivery?
- Why is it so important to follow a holistic and country-driven approach in the formulation of a strategy to revitalize public administration?
- To what extent can developing countries rely on civil service models originating in more economically advanced countries to reform human resources management practices?
- What is the role of merit-based recruitment and promotion in transforming the quality of human capital in the public service? How can more qualified women, as well as minority groups, be recruited and promoted through merit-based systems in the civil service?
- What is the role of remuneration in attracting and retaining highly competent staff in the public sector, particularly considering the current labour market conditions?
- To what extent should developing countries devolve human resources management functions to ministries and departments?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the New Public Management model and the career-based system, respectively, from the perspective of human resources management in the public service?
- What criteria could guide Governments in the selection of institutional models to deliver capacity development and training of staff in the public sector?
- What is the role of leadership in revitalizing public administration?
- What role should the United Nations play in facilitating the necessary capacity-building in Member States?

II. Transforming the role of human resources

A. Developing a holistic and country-driven approach

3. Capacity development of the public administration system is both a process and a goal. A strategy to revitalize public administration will require simultaneous capacity development at three main levels, namely, (a) the enabling environment, (b) the entity level, and (c) human resources (see figure below). The enabling environment is generally defined as the policy, legal and regulatory framework governing public management; accountability structures; broader relationship within the governance system; as well as resource flows. Capacity development at the entity level would entail strengthening of dimensions, such as the organizational vision, mission and strategy; culture, structure and competencies; processes; human, financial and information resources; interrelationships with key stakeholders; and infrastructure. At the human resources level, capacity-building would particularly focus on professional competencies; performance management; values, ethics and attitudes; communications skills; and interrelationships and teamwork in the workplace. Capacity development of human resources in the public sector, however, cannot be isolated from reform at the enabling environment and organizational levels. For example, legal and policy frameworks and institutional structures and operational rules and procedures greatly impact on issues of recruitment, deployment, promotion, motivation, morale and performance of employees.



4. In developing a strategy to revitalize public administration, it has to be borne in mind that the public sector is composed of many different types of organizations that have been created to meet specific needs of the public. Over a period of time, those entities have developed their own unique character and organizational culture.

That heterogeneity of institutional models[4] and organizational cultures in the public sector has to be taken into account in the development of a strategy to revitalize public administration, as it will involve a different mix of capacity development measures. Also, understanding the complex interaction of capabilities, culture, information and incentives in a particular country context, is inherently difficult. For those reasons, emboldening the civil service from a position of weakness is always going to be a major endeavour, requiring a combination of long-term strategy and short-term measures.

5. Recent efforts to reform public administration have generally included the redefinition of the role of the State in public management, as well as greater emphasis on collaboration with the private sector and civil society in service delivery. In most instances, the objective of those efforts has been to refocus and strengthen the capacities of the public sector to meet ever-growing economic, social and environmental challenges. The State is increasingly expected to reform, to decentralize, and to contract out in order to become more efficient and responsive. The principle of efficiency has very much assumed central importance in today's public management. One apparent implication of that shift in societal values is the changing role of senior civil servants in public management. For example, an underlying trend seems to suggest that senior civil servants are gradually becoming more political and less technical, as public institutions assume more operational autonomy, and citizens' demand enhanced efficiency and responsiveness in service delivery.

6. In the long run, sustainable institutions can only be built within a public administration system that fosters adequate checks and balances through core institutions, such as parliament, the judiciary, and oversight bodies, as well as clear separation of powers among the three branches of the State.[5] But, before embarking on a major programme to revitalize public administration, government leaders need to carefully diagnose the inherited conditions. It is impossible, or at least impractical, to develop capacities without knowing what the weaknesses are. Capacity assessment is a process whereby the various dimensions of capacity are professionally assessed and evaluated within a particular context. A carefully conducted capacity assessment can therefore inform the adoption of a country-driven institutional framework, including the development of key success factors, as well as the identification and promotion of common values, standards and professional competencies of staff.

7. The central premise of the present paper is that people are the lifeblood of any organization and the agents of reform and renewal in public administration. The knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of public servants are at the heart of State performance. All four attributes have to be developed simultaneously if marked improvement is to be achieved in the performance of organizations. In some countries, for example, it can be argued that despite major progress in building up the knowledge and skills of senior civil servants, insufficient attention has been devoted to the development of values and attitudes of staff that underpin the culture of organizations. Improved human resources management, through skilled, competent and motivated staff, and empowered, responsible and accountable managers, is therefore very much the foundation for more effective service delivery in the public sector.

8. Despite being faced with new and complex challenges, many developing countries are simultaneously experiencing significant brain drain in the public sector,[6] resulting in major erosion of managerial, technical and administrative capacity. The brain drain has been caused by a number of interrelated factors, such as more attractive remuneration in the private and non-governmental sectors; loss of pride in the concept of public service; increased politicization and lowering of professional standards; and gradual decay of national governance systems. Together, those factors have contributed to the diminishing of prestige and social value of employment in the public sector. Reversing that erosion of human capital, and transforming people into an engine of change and renewal in public administration will require both visionary leadership and strategic planning and management.

9. Political leadership plays a particularly important role by articulating the vision for reform, by providing a sense of direction, and by imbuing staff with a feeling of collective responsibility for realizing the agreed goals and strategies. It is leadership — both political and administrative — that primarily drives the change process. That lesson has been amply demonstrated in numerous countries where major upgrading of both policy and legal frameworks and the knowledge and skills of senior officials in the civil service has not resulted in commensurate gains in administrative quality and efficiency in the public sector. That is a dilemma that Governments need to address if they are to make any fundamental improvements in the delivery of services to the public. A major weakness of many reform initiatives has undoubtedly been a lack of sustained leadership commitment. While countries successful in strengthening public administration pursued different reform strategies, they all had in common leadership that possessed the political courage and determination to make difficult decisions and to implement the agreed strategies.

B. Creating an enabling environment

10. The civil service is under severe strain in many countries due to various converging factors. A greater role for the private sector in national development, for example, has shifted the responsibility of public administration from operating the economy to steering and facilitating it. That realignment of responsibilities within the governance system has, inter alia, increased the need for public administration capacity to coordinate, to formulate policy options, to resolve conflicts, to promote private sector development, to manage subcontracts, and to enforce legal and regulatory frameworks. Changing social values are also exerting a major impact upon the character and operations of the civil service worldwide. Together, all those trends require new human resources competencies, professional behaviour and values of civil servants.

11. Recent changes in labour markets are also providing talented staff with unprecedented opportunities for career mobility and professional growth. The demand for highly competent staff in many developing countries is shifting as the result of growth in employment opportunities in the private and non-governmental sectors. That shift in demand for skilled staff would normally result in higher wages for senior staff in the civil service according to economic theory. However, salary decisions in the public sector very seldom follow such a flexible pattern. The perceived inability of the public sector in many countries to offer competitive conditions of service to highly competent staff is making it much harder for

Governments to attract and retain highly skilled civil servants. Enhanced demand for quality staff has therefore heightened the importance of adequate monetary rewards in attracting and retaining quality employees in the public sector. Those competitive pressures have also increased the role of other key non-monetary rewards, such as improved career opportunities and greater empowerment of highly competent and dedicated staff in the workplace.

1. Restoring pride in the concept of public service

12. Traditionally, talented young people have opted to join the public service because of opportunities for challenging work, prestige and career advancement potential. Career development prospects, in fact, have generally been considered a determining factor in retaining highly competent staff in the civil service. But more recently, other variables, such as, remuneration and the professional image of the public sector, have assumed great importance as well. At the same time, the required competencies of civil servants are rapidly changing owing to many converging factors at the local, national and global levels. Governments therefore need to put in place an enabling environment and appropriate incentives to promote the retention of high-quality staff in the public service. To achieve that goal, Governments will have to devote more resources towards enhancing the image of the public service. That also includes raising the profile of outstanding public servants; providing interesting learning and training opportunities for deserving staff; offering top young graduates an attractive career in the public service; conducting orientation programmes for new staff; encouraging the media to report more from the work of public servants; organizing special events and open houses to publicize the work of public organizations; introducing awards for excellent team as well as individual performance; and celebrating a "Public Service Day", etc.

13. The ongoing erosion of public service capacities is clearly one of the signal phenomena of our times.[7] That erosion takes on numerous forms, but is widespread throughout the world. In almost every country, it manifests itself in the loss of prestige and diminished attraction of the public service profession, which until very recently, was an avenue of choice for young and talented individuals in many countries. The decline in the prestige of the public service has greatly undermined the ability of the State to fulfil its constitutional mandate. In some developing countries, with high unemployment rates, the public service is now regarded as the avenue of last resort from prevailing uncertainties. Even so, it is the unskilled, or those with limited marketable aptitudes, whom the Government is able to attract. At the highest levels, the public service is having great difficulty attracting competent specialists, policy advisers and managers. It seems that that erosion in human resources capacities in the public sector has reached critical proportions in many parts of the world, particularly considering the growing demands of citizens for enhanced efficiency and responsiveness in service delivery. Whether perceived or real, the trend towards politicization and privatization of every public sphere has meant for public servants a growing sense that they no longer serve the "common good", the citizen or the State, but rather an individual, or a minister.

14. A values shift has clearly taken place in many countries as it relates to the relative importance of public sector employment vis-à-vis the private sector. That shift has eroded in a major way the image of the public service and turned the private sector into an "employer of choice" for most well-educated and talented young people. That trend is not likely to be reversed without a convincing response

by the State, including addressing the issue of pride in public sector employment; the remuneration of civil servants; better definition of the role of the State in public management; development of core competencies of staff; as well as a host of other motivational and inspirational factors that have always meant so much for talented young people aspiring to a career in the public service.

15. Essential to restoring pride in the public service is the introduction of meritocratic recruitment and promotion of civil servants through high entry standards and opportunities for career advancement based on performance. Meritocracy bestows prestige on employment in the civil service and encourages high-quality staff to choose government as the "employer of choice". A merit-based recruitment and promotion system, which has become an integral part of the "psychological contract"[8] between staff and managers in the public sector, is also likely to foster a culture of performance-orientation and professionalism in the civil service, thereby forging better congruence between the expected and actual behaviour of civil servants.

16. One way to improve and retain very qualified young staff members is to develop better promotion policies. For example, an opportunity to be given more challenging tasks and to be promoted through one's own achievements may play an important part in recruitment and retention. Another way to recruit highly qualified young graduates to government could be to provide attractive opportunities for more intensive vocational and professional training in the public service. A programme to build up the professional capacities of talented young staff, combined with attractive career development potential, could play a key role in enhancing the competitiveness of the public sector in recruiting top graduates vis-à-vis the private and non-governmental sectors.

2. Enhancing respect for professionalism

17. Empirical evidence clearly indicates that well-functioning bureaucracies can promote growth and reduce poverty.[9] Towards that end, competitive or merit-based recruitment and promotion is considered essential for building an effective bureaucracy. Countries where political appointments run deep in the civil service, combined with low remuneration of officials, and weak institutional checks and balances, generally have achieved much lower rates of economic growth and social development. In that respect, it is particularly important to clarify the respective role of politicians and senior civil servants in public management, as that relationship can greatly affect the degree of professionalism in government.

18. A well-functioning civil service is generally characterized by professionalism, efficiency and responsiveness, impartiality, high ethical standards, esprit de corps, and long-term perspective. In sum, there is solid congruence between the expected and actual behaviour of public servants. However, in many countries, the civil service does not meet those criteria, but is rather characterized by patronage, clientelism, a low level of professionalism and efficiency, and a high degree of corruption. Institutional capacity and political will are therefore very much required to transform the organizational culture in the public sector under those conditions. Some countries are already making solid progress in that regard. In Africa, for example, South Africa, Namibia and Ghana have made concerted efforts in recent years to bring their civil service laws into conformity with high standards of professionalism and ethics.

19. The restructuring of the public service in many countries in recent years has often resulted in some retrenchment of civil servants and recruitment of new ones from the private and non-governmental sectors. While the new entrants have often brought with them private sector values and practices, at the same time that strategy has sometimes created new challenges, such as the need for intensive skill-building of the incoming staff to enable them to comprehend existing policy frameworks, as a precondition for the design of effective implementation strategies for improved service delivery. Overall, the strategy of outsourcing private sector personnel to perform public sector duties seems to offer some promise in terms of raising professional standards and efficiency, particularly where the quality and responsiveness of service delivery has traditionally been very low.

20. The adoption of the New Public Management[10] model has also generally resulted in greater political accountability of senior policy makers in government. But, how the evolving civil service system will balance the traditional principle of political neutrality of public servants, which has underpinned the career-based system, with new demands for enhanced responsiveness of civil servants or what is often termed "professionalism" will most likely be a significant challenge under the New Public Management framework. While that question is central to the design of any professionally-oriented civil service system, and the preferred model will differ from one country to another, there is consensus that human resources management frameworks in the public service should always promote high ethical standards and responsiveness, as well as the application of the merit principle in recruitment and promotion. In most developing countries, where the supply of highly trained staff is generally low, combined with weak institutional systems of checks and balances, the establishment of a career system would seem to be much more likely to strengthen both professional personnel management and the administration of the public sector.

3. Improving conditions of service

21. A 1996 study[11] by Evans and Rauch concluded that meritocratic recruitment and promotion and adequacy of pay were correlated with economic growth, as well as with investors' perception of bureaucratic capability, even after allowing for income and educational differences. That finding highlights the importance of adequate pay in attracting and retaining highly qualified staff in the service of the State. However, in many developing countries the remuneration of civil servants, particularly senior officials, has been rapidly declining in recent years, compared with peers in the private and non-governmental sectors. At the same time, the number of public servants has risen significantly owing to political pressure to find work for those unemployed. The net result has been significant erosion in the salaries of civil servants, which has seriously eroded the competitiveness of the State as an employer of high-quality staff. In addition, the salaries of senior officials who formulate public policies and direct their implementation have often been allowed to erode more than those in the lower echelon of the civil service for political reasons, greatly undermining the ability of the State to recruit talent in important senior level posts. In the United Republic of Tanzania, for example, it is estimated that the purchasing power of civil service salaries in 1986 was only one twentieth of what it had been in 1969, with quite dramatic effect on staff productivity.[12] While the wages of civil servants is not the only incentive to attract competent staff to government, salaries are an increasingly important factor when competing for new staff, particularly highly qualified young graduates.

22. There is no universal standard of the optimal ratio between remuneration in the public and private sectors. In some countries, such as Singapore, the salaries of civil servants may in fact be higher than those in the private sector. However, that is the exception to the rule. Generally the remuneration of public servants compared to private sector employees is considerably lower. However, if the performance of the civil service in many countries is to be significantly enhanced, Governments, in many instances, will have to reduce the number of public servants, decompress the wage structure, and raise average wages. That process, on the other hand, will always be politically difficult and require extensive consultations with representatives of staff unions. Some countries are also introducing new remuneration policies and creating performance-based and other incentives to attract and motivate staff. A few countries, for example, have introduced independent remuneration review boards to guide the Government in decisions concerning salaries of top officials in government based on well-defined criteria. Those institutional approaches have generally introduced greater professionalism and transparency in salary decisions of senior officials in the public service.

III. Building blocks for capacity development of human resources

This section will focus on the development of a capacity development strategy, composed of five main components and aimed at enhancing the quality of the human capital in the public sector.

A. Constructing an appropriate institutional framework

23. While there is general consensus on the core competencies required for an effective public administration, there is much less agreement among politicians, practitioners and academics on the most appropriate institutional framework to foster the development of those important skills. Two competing models have evolved over the past few decades, offering possible solution to Governments to that challenge. The first one is the traditional career-based system, while the second one is the job-oriented New Public Management model. Both have important strengths and weaknesses, but are very much premised on different administrative precepts, assumptions and value systems, ultimately offering quite a contrasting profile of the "ideal public servant".

24. Selecting the career-based system, the New Public Management model, or a mix of both, will always depend on the local context. For example, the New Public Management model would tend to be suited where the following conditions are met: large supply of skilled individuals in the labour market; respect for the rule of law; relative absence of nepotism, political clientelism or patronage in public administration; a tradition of transparency in recruitment, remuneration, and promotion of staff in the public service; and a culture in society of geographical and occupational mobility. Even where the above conditions are present, the job-oriented model may stand a better chance in occupational groups that exist in both the private and public sectors, and where the conditions of service are relatively comparable. On the other hand, it would seem that the above conditions are very seldom met in developing countries, whose capability and culture, in most instances, may not yet be ripe for the adoption of the New Public Management model. Developing

countries would therefore generally be well advised to opt for the establishment of an effective central personnel management authority, capable of acting as a professional, fair, and apolitical guardian of the best traditions and values in the public service, as well as the adoption of a career system to ensure merit-based employment, coupled with strong focus on capacity development of staff. More recently, some countries have opted for a mixed model by setting up a Senior Executive Service, to promote greater cohesion among high-level civil servants in the public sector; to promote the maintenance of institutional memory; and to align the interests of key officials with that of the State. Other posts in the civil service, however, would be subject to open competition in the labour market according to that model.

25. The traditional career-based system would generally provide the best institutional framework for recruitment and retention of staff in the following functional areas: (a) where the Government has a monopoly, or where the private sector plays no significant role; (b) a high degree of discretion and confidentiality is required; (c) a high degree of consistency is demanded or where institutional memory is an important factor, arguably more important than the mastery of technique; and (d) where the need for neutral competence, objectivity and impartiality calls for some considerable degree of separation from both partisan activities and profitable pursuits. Posts falling in those categories would often include high-level policy analysts, policy advisers, programme managers, resource managers (financial, human, information), judges, auditors and controllers.

26. Considering the financial and economic pressures facing most countries, as well as recent trends in information and communications technologies, in labour markets, and globalization more generally, there seems to be an emerging consensus that Governments would be well advised to consider a gradual move towards the development of more open and flexible employment frameworks, while ensuring that they are also equitable and well structured and promote the maintenance of traditional ethos and a high level of accountability in the public service, including the impartiality, professionalism and long-term perspective of civil servants. By now it is also well accepted that no country can replicate the human resources management reform of another country. Developing countries should therefore pursue a cautious approach with regard to the adoption of civil service models originating in more economically advanced countries, as mentioned earlier. That means that while good public administration principles, such as efficiency, transparency, responsiveness and accountability, remain universally accepted, countries will have to adapt them to the local context. While the delegation of recruitment of staff from central agencies, such as public service commissions, to ministries and departments has generally proved effective, the existence of adequate oversight and quality control mechanisms in that area is essential to avoid abuse and malpractices. The delegation of recruitment responsibilities should therefore generally be devolved gradually, particularly in countries where there is a lack of human resources management capacity in ministries and departments. Strong capacity for human resources management should therefore be built in parallel in ministries and departments as related functions are devolved.

27. Owing to the evolving nature of business planning in public sector organizations, with more emphasis on well-defined outcomes and outputs, the strengthening of human resources management and the reform of financial management systems should also go hand-in-hand. Human resources management

and financial management-related reform should therefore be carefully synchronized to ensure satisfactory alignment in the utilization of those key corporate resources. The implementation of different components of human resources management-related reform should also be internally well coordinated. In addition, human resources managers should play a more influential role in corporate decision-making processes, irrespective of whether the Government decides to adopt a career-based system or the job-oriented model.

B. Identifying common values and professional standards

28. Codification of principles and expectations of behaviour of civil servants has always been a key component of public administration-related reforms. Public service professionalism is usually used to describe the behaviour of civil servants when characterized by loyalty, neutrality, transparency, diligence, punctuality, effectiveness, impartiality, as well as other values important in the local context. Public service professionalism embraces the notion that public servants need to be imbued with shared values, and trained in core skills essential for the performance of their duties. For example, a career system based on the merit principle, which fairly and impartially recruits and promotes public servants, will always set the tone and tenor for other performance-related standards in the public service. Further, well-articulated and fair human resources policies and practices as they relate to appropriate remuneration, training opportunities, disciplinary procedures and the like are also integral to the development of effective professional standards. More importantly, a culture of professionalism and pride needs to be progressively nurtured through the recognition of good work of teams and individuals, as well as correction of poor performance.

29. Public service ethics is generally defined as the broad norms that define how public servants, as agents of the State, and, where applicable, as members of an established profession, such as accounting, finance, economics, law, etc., should exercise judgement and discretion in carrying out their official duties. A public service committed to professionalism is more likely to attain its goals if it has in place an effective ethics infrastructure, consisting of relevant rules, codes of conduct and guidelines that provide incentives for public officials to act in a transparent and accountable manner, and, where necessary, penalties for breaking professional norms and standards. Governments would also do well to intensify training efforts to make the public sector corruption-free.

30. The development of effective institutional structures and healthy organizational culture and ethos are essential for efficient and responsive public service management. The former can be described as the sum of the expected behaviours prescribed in formal documents and setting expectations regarding objectives and outcomes for a given course of action. The latter, by contrast, is defined as the actual behaviours observed in organizational life; the values, standards and norms which are really put into practice by staff. A key objective of public administration-related reform, particularly at initial stages, is to promote greater alignment between the two. The compliance of members can be elicited either through the force of example, or as a result of tradition or deeply ingrained habits. How such dynamics are brought about is a complex subject, which can only be explained by a good understanding of the interaction between culture, incentives and capabilities in the public service at the national level.

31. The greatest strength of any public administration is the quality of its civil servants and managers. The art and science of management is therefore to create an organizational culture and environment that enables civil servants to contribute to their maximum potential. Experience has shown that in order to promote the development of a new culture in the public service and to build up the necessary human resources capacities, it is important to define carefully the core values, competencies and standards that are directly related to the successful performance of staff and managers. Once those have been defined, an appropriate country-specific "values framework" and "competency model" can be used as the base for capacity development and training in the public sector, as well as recruitment, promotion and performance appraisal. As a first step in the transformational process, leaders should initiate a participatory process to define the common values of staff in the public sector, as well as core professional and managerial competencies. It is particularly important that the definition of the values, standards and core competencies be undertaken through a participatory process to promote awareness, ownership and accountability of staff. The adopted "values framework" and "competency model" should also be widely publicized in society to foster a culture of transparency and accountability in the public service.

C. Developing competency frameworks for core professional groups

32. The development of effective public service management will not only require the adoption of an appropriate legal, policy and institutional framework, and the identification of sound professional standards and values, but, even more importantly, extensive skills development of staff as well. To promote sustainability of the reform process, Governments would be well advised to involve civil servants in the development of institutional frameworks and professional standards, as well as in the identification of core competencies to be fostered in the public sector. The menu of professional competencies to be developed in the public sector will always depend on the local context, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the human capital. An important objective with the definition of both core and specific competencies is to develop shared language as it relates to performance standards and technical and managerial excellence. To promote the realization of that goal, the paper suggests the design of harmonized competency frameworks in five core areas, namely, (a) leadership, (b) management, (c) policy analysis, (d) human resources management, and (e) information technology.

33. Empirical evidence suggests that 20 per cent of increased efficiency and productivity in public organizations can be explained by the introduction of new technologies, while the remaining 80 per cent depend more on the quality of management, leadership and innovation. How people are engaged, treated and developed in the change process will ultimately determine whether staff is productive or not. The exercise of leadership is therefore highly complex and requires very special skills and personal attributes, often associated with emotional maturity and intelligence. Many Governments are undertaking reviews of leadership and management competencies. The Public Service Commission of Canada, for example, recently undertook an extensive study to define core leadership competencies for the twenty-first century. Those competencies were grouped into five main categories: (a) intellectual, (b) future-building, (c) management, (d) relationship, and (e) personal.

34. UNCEPA has repeatedly advised Member States to strengthen capacity development of managers responsible for the delivery of public services. Apart from possessing technical knowledge, managers need to be equipped with supervisory, negotiation, organizational and communication skills as well. To nurture effective managers, organizations should put in place appropriate management development programmes, aimed at providing both hands-on (e.g., rotational assignments, secondments, etc.) and formal educational opportunities (conducting workshops, supporting university education, sabbaticals, etc.).

35. Better skills in policy analysis can enable public administrators to play a more effective role in national development. Public administrators need to have skills to develop, assess and evaluate different policy options. Policy analysis and development always requires careful balancing of interests of different stakeholders, affected by the policies concerned. To acquire and maintain policy analysis skills, public administrators need to have opportunities for regular ongoing education through university courses, by attending conferences and workshops, as well as by having access to other self-study resources.

36. To retain and develop its fair share of the best talent, public sector organizations need to adopt policies aimed at planning, recruitment, education, development and motivation of employees. To institutionalize those functions, they will need to put in place units and administrative systems, properly resourced and effectively managed. The latter requires strong cadres of human resources professionals, who should be properly developed through deliberate and sustained capacity development programmes, based on clear competency requirements. Human resources management should not be just a support function involved in managing personnel processes and ensuring compliance with rules and regulations. Instead, it must have the mandate and capacity to design and implement human resources management approaches to attain the strategic goals of the respective public sector organization.

37. Recognizing the potential benefits of enhanced use of information technology in public management, Governments are increasingly introducing such innovations into the management of both programmes and operations, particularly, in the areas of planning, financial management and accounting, delivery of public services, and human resources management. Training in the use of information technology should also become part and parcel of career development programmes in public organizations. That training should consist of different kinds of programmes, including basic training focusing on capacity development of public employees in the use of information technology, as well as specialized training for staff who are responsible for running information technology infrastructures.

D. Designing effective capacity development strategies

38. Training is the basic engine for administrative change. It involves the development of the requisite knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of staff at all levels. In a more complex and demanding working environment, civil servants, while, advancing the public interest, increasingly need more high-level competencies and skills to relate to politicians, other government departments, as well as key stakeholders, including more in-depth knowledge of society itself. At the

same time, there is a great need to invest in capacity development of administrative support staff to promote more efficient public management.

39. Civil servants also need greater understanding of the complexities of political and administrative decision-making processes. Clear understanding of roles and responsibilities in the administrative system is essential for efficient and responsive delivery of services. Transparent, responsive and equitable administration of public policies is increasingly a clear expectation of citizens and politicians alike. Each organization should therefore have in place a training and capacity development strategy, aiming to foster a spirit of professional development, continuous learning, receptiveness to innovations and new approaches, and knowledge acquisition among staff. New methodologies and training tools also need to be developed to promote a culture of innovation and experimentation among staff in the public sector.

40. There is no single model more suitable than others when it comes to the delivery of training and capacity development of staff in the public sector. For example, central training institutions tend to promote greater sense of identity and solidarity among public servants, while universities may promote more critical problem-solving and exchange. The "learning organization" model on the other hand, makes the institution itself the locus of knowledge acquisition and capacity development, particularly through internal mentoring and coaching. The selection of a particular institutional arrangement will always depend on existing capacities, as well as the national and regional context. Most national training strategies would therefore require a mix of different institutions to deliver capacity development and training. Regular assessments should also be undertaken of the effectiveness of training efforts. At the outset, the objective of training has to be firmly established. For example, is the goal to transmit values, skills or knowledge? That analysis will determine the selection of the respective institutional model.

E. Institutionalizing human resources planning

41. UNCEPA emphasized at its Second Meeting in April 2003 the importance of Member States adopting a strategy to combat ongoing erosion of human resources capacities in the public sector. According to the Committee, key elements of such a strategy should include: establishing human resources planning management systems and units; professionalizing the public service, including human resources management; enhancing the social value of service to the public; creating a learning culture in public institutions; and utilizing the best talent from underrepresented groups. The Committee also stressed the need to develop strong cadres of human resources management professionals in the public sector, including effective information management.

42. The present paper suggests that Governments may wish to consider institutionalizing a participatory process at the country level to prepare a medium- to long-term strategy to assess the state of the human capital in the public sector. A regular analytical report on the state of human capital in the public sector could enable Governments to measure more systematically the progress of capacity development efforts. The report could analyse key issues and trends affecting human resources management, including forecasting of current and emerging skills required in the public service; upcoming vacancies; succession planning; performance appraisal; remuneration; workload analysis; and staff development and training.

Some countries, such as Australia, have already begun to publish an annual report of that nature. Institutionalizing such a process in central government could also strengthen the development of institutional memory in human resources management units in ministries and departments.

IV. Conclusion: human resources capacity is key to high-quality public administration

A. Capacity development of staff requires long-term perspective and commitment

43. **The core message of the present paper is that human resources capacity is critical to the quality of public administration in any country. Capacity development of human capital, however, does not happen overnight or in a vacuum. It requires effective implementation of a holistic and homegrown strategy, underpinned by long-term political commitment. Leadership is essential as the transformation process in most countries is more about reforming values and attitudes than the development of new knowledge and skills of staff. Changing the administrative culture in the public sector is also likely to require sustained efforts over a long period of time. Reversing the ongoing erosion of human capital in the public sector in many countries will similarly require comprehensive planning and the creation of dedicated and highly qualified human resources management capacities in ministries and departments. It also requires putting in place an effective enabling environment aimed at restoring pride in employment in the public service, raising respect for professional standards, as well as improving the conditions of service for staff. For example, if Governments cannot enhance their competitiveness in the labour market vis-à-vis the private and non-governmental sectors, they will find it very difficult to recruit and retain highly competent staff. While the level of remuneration is not the only factor in the recruitment and retention of senior officials, it is particularly important when it comes to attracting new staff into the public service, including those with specialized skills. Those competitive pressures in the labour market have also increased the role of other key non-monetary rewards, such as improved career opportunities and greater empowerment of highly competent and dedicated staff.**

B. Merit-based recruitment and promotion in the civil service is essential

44. **The key to restoring pride in the public service is the introduction of meritocratic recruitment and promotion of civil servants through high entry standards and opportunities for career advancement based on performance. Meritocracy bestows prestige on employment in the civil service and encourages high-quality staff to choose government as an "employer of choice". A merit-based recruitment, remuneration and promotion system, combined with fundamental reform of human resources management systems and practices, is also likely to foster a culture of performance-orientation in the civil service. Retaining highly qualified staff in the public service will also**

require the development of a strategy that includes the following: development of a plan to enhance the image of the public sector; promotion of equitable representation of all relevant groups in the civil service; provision of good career development opportunities; adequate job security; competitive remuneration; education and training opportunities, recognition and reward for excellent performance; and a healthy working environment.

45. Whether countries should adopt a career-based system or the job-oriented New Public Management model will ultimately depend on the specific local context and capacities. Where well-qualified human resources are in large supply and an effective institutional oversight and compliance mechanism already well established, for example, the introduction of more open recruitment systems may in fact improve the overall effectiveness of government. In most developing countries, on the other hand, where the supply of highly trained staff is much lower, combined with weak institutional systems of checks and balances, the establishment of a career system would seem to be much more likely to strengthen both personnel management and the administration of the public sector.

C. Determined and skilful political leadership drives the reform process

46. Revitalization of public administration depends more than anything else on the commitment and determination of the political leadership. Commitment of political leadership is therefore essential for the formulation of a strategy to strengthen the capacity of human capital in order to revitalize public administration at the national level. As mentioned earlier, empirical findings support the notion that the quality of leadership is a determining factor in explaining successful public sector reform initiatives in Member States. By promoting leadership development at all levels, Governments can help inculcate a culture of problem-solving and initiative-taking in the public service. The exercise of leadership is highly complex and capacity development of leaders has to take that into account. For example, it has been noted that senior executives, while highly driven and results-oriented, often do not possess effective skills in building relations with staff and stakeholders. Another perceived weakness in the capacity of many senior officials in the public sector is sometimes lack of ability to project a strategic vision for the respective organization.

D. Training of staff is an important engine for administrative change

47. Public administration cannot be reformed or revitalized without capacity development of staff. It involves the development of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of staff at all levels in the public sector. There is no single institutional model more suitable than others when it comes to the delivery of training and capacity development of staff in the public sector. The selection of a particular institutional arrangement will therefore always depend on existing capacities, as well as the national and regional context. Most national training strategies would therefore require a mix of different institutions to deliver

capacity development and training of staff. The first step is always to define the objective of the training effort and then to determine which institutional modality is most likely to be effective in realizing the respective goal. For example, is the objective to transmit values, skills or knowledge? That analysis will determine the selection of the respective institutional model. Central training institutions, for example, are often considered well-suited to inculcate common values and standards in the public sector, while other mechanisms may be more effective in imparting knowledge and professional skills. Therefore, the key issues to be considered in selecting appropriate institutional models for the delivery of training include: (a) the purpose of the training; (b) the target group; (c) the specific content; (d) the training modality; and (e) the available resources.

V. Role of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance

48. The challenge of revitalizing public administration through capacity-building of human capital is both complex and dependent upon the development and effective implementation of a holistic and long-term approach. The United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance has the mandate, the expertise and the experience to make a focused contribution to enhance the capacities of Member States to meet that important challenge. The Committee is encouraged to prioritize activities proposed by the Programme in this area.

To Member States:

- To adopt a national strategy to further strengthen the management of human capital in the public sector, including developing a plan to attract and retain a fair share of the best talent in the service of the State
- To review recruitment and incentives strategies with the aim of making public sector employment more attractive to young and talented graduates
- To strengthen medium- and long-term human resources planning in the public sector
- To incorporate principles expressed in regional public service charters into relevant provisions of national legislation and ethics infrastructure
- To promote gender mainstreaming and respect for diversity in human resources planning and management strategies

To the United Nations:

- To further elaborate, the linkages between quality staffing and revitalization of public administration in the next *World Public Sector Report* (scheduled for publication in 2005) will be devoted to human resources development

- **To discuss selected priority human resources management-related issues in forums at the regional level, as part of the preparatory process for the publication of the 2005 *World Public Sector Report***
- **To create a hub on the United Nations Online Network on Public Administration and Finance, dedicated to the development of the 2005 *World Public Sector Report***
- **To disseminate the recently developed CD-ROM on recruitment strategies[13] in the official languages of the United Nations to Governments and relevant institutions, and to consider preparing a similar product on human resources planning in the public sector**
- **To complete the design and pilot testing of a leadership development training programme for senior government officials in Africa[14]**
- **To support the work of the New Partnership for Africa's Development in the area of human resources development in the public sector in Africa**
- **To continue to raise the profile of the United Nations Public Service Awards in order to encourage a greater number of organizations in Member States to participate in this important process**
- **To prepare a publication of selected innovations that have been recognized through the United Nations Public Service Awards**
- **To prepare targeted training modules based on the findings and recommendations of recent policy analysis studies of the State of accountability and transparency in the public sector in the Africa and Arab States region respectively[15]**
- **To target some technical cooperation activities to capacity development of human resources**

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 24* (E/2002/84-E/CN.16/2002/8), summary.

[2] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 44* (E/2003/44-E/C.16/2003/6), para. 10.

[3] Ibid., para. 14.

[4] Academics have discerned four broad types of organizations in the public sector: (a) the "production organization", where both outputs and outcomes are observable (i.e., revenue authorities); (b) the "procedural organization", in which managers can observe the outputs, but not the outcomes (i.e., army at peacetime); (c) the "craft organization", where the activities are difficult to observe, but the outcomes are more easily observable (i.e., public engineering project); and (d) the "coping organization", where neither the outputs nor the outcomes are easily observable (i.e., public school).

[5] World Bank, *World Development Report 1997: The State in a Changing World* (Washington, D.C., July 1997), chap. 5.

[6] For the purpose of this background paper, the public sector is defined as including institutions in all branches of the State — the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary. The Executive arm is considered to encompass the civil service, local governments, publicly owned enterprises and the quasi-public sector. The public service comprises all institutions in the Executive. The civil

service generally constitutes the permanent secretariat or appointed officials of a national Government.

[7] See keynote address by Gerald and Naomi Caiden at the American Society of Public Administration (ASPA) National Congress in Phoenix, Arizona, March 2002.

[8] The term "psychological contract" was first coined by Prof. Chris Argyris in the 1960s and is defined as the unwritten and uncodified area of employment relationship. A key feature of the "psychological contract" is that the individual assents to make and accept certain promises as he or she understands them. The extent to which promises and expectations are met by the employer will generally have a pivotal impact on the health of the "psychological contract".

[9] See *World Development Report 1997*, chap. 5.

[10] "New Public Management is a field of discussion largely about policy interventions within executive government. The characteristic instruments of such policy interventions are institutional rules and organizational routines affecting expenditures planning and financial management, civil service and labour relations, procurement organization and methods, and audit and evaluation. These instruments exercise a pervasive influence over many kinds of decisions within government. While they do not determine the scope or programmatic content of governmental activity, these government-wide institutional rules and organizational routines affect how government agencies are managed, operated and overseen: they structure that part of the government process usually described as public management. In recent years, political executives, central agency leaders, and legislators in numerous settings have demonstrated interest in policies affecting public management, the best-known cases of which are the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia." Michael Barzelay, *The New Public Management: Improving Research and Policy Dialogue* (University of California Press, 2001).

[11] Peter B. Evans and James E. Rauch, "Bureaucratic Structure and Economic Growth: Some Preliminary Analysis of Data on 35 Developing Countries", 1996.

[12] M. Stevens (1994): Public Expenditure and Civil Service Reform in Tanzania, World Bank.

[13] The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in cooperation with the International Public Management Association for Human Resources, has recently prepared a CD-ROM-based Resource Guide on Recruitment Strategies for use by practitioners in this area.

[14] The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in cooperation with the Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA), have agreed to initiate a four-year effort to improve the quality of education and training in public administration for both the current and next generation of government leaders.

[15] The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in cooperation with the African Training Research Centre in Administration for Development (CAFRAD), has developed a CD-ROM and training manual on ethical dilemmas (nepotism, favouritism, etc.) to which every civil servant may be daily exposed. These training materials place emphasis on action rather than theory.

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Revitalizing public administration

The role of the public sector in advancing the knowledge society

Report of the Secretariat

Summary

The knowledge society and the role of the public sector in its development is a critical area of study. The idea of knowledge development as an important element of governance is certainly not new. However, knowledge has assumed an even greater degree of relevance as well as a different shape with the advent and deepening of the knowledge economy and society. Using the United Nations Millennium Declaration as a framework for the knowledge society, Governments and the international community must seek to determine those knowledge-related activities and policy decisions that add public value and result in the meaningful utilization of knowledge throughout the whole of society. However, these general goals and recommendations must be translated into more concise, though flexible, conceptual frameworks, implementable policy and concrete actions. How this is to be accomplished remains somewhat vague, and most certainly complex. There is thus a need to further clarify and make more tangible the concepts and practicalities of the knowledge society. The public sector is critical to this effort.

The present paper reflects the discussions at the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Knowledge Systems for Development, held at United Nations Headquarters on 4 and 5 September 2003, as well as the key messages concerning knowledge as contained in the *2003 World Public Sector Report: e-Government at the Crossroads*.

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I. Background

1. At its inaugural 2002 meeting, the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration considered the topic of the capacity of the public sector to capture the benefits of the revolutions in knowledge, innovation and technology, as well as its ability to put in place policies and conditions that would create an enabling environment at the societal level. In its report, the Committee recognized that capturing and disseminating data and information, largely associated with e-government initiatives, was a first step towards this end, but that in order to properly reap the rewards of the broader knowledge society, more had to be done. It therefore recommended that "further work be undertaken to better define the role of the state as enabler and as user of knowledge ... in order to support and encourage innovation throughout the public administration and the society as a whole."[1]

2. This expanded mandate led to the creation of the Knowledge Management Branch in Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat which, in addition to continuing work on e-government, is tasked specifically with examining issues pertaining to the knowledge society and knowledge in the public sector. This represents a deepening of the Division's work on good governance for the twenty-first century, in that improved knowledge generation, exchange and utilization within the public sector constitutes an important factor not only in innovation but also in learning, as well as more relevant and effective policy-making and public service delivery. Moreover, the implementation of sound knowledge governance structures at the societal level encourages greater inclusion, participation and expression of human rights, all central aspects of the good governance framework.

3. In September 2003, the Division convened the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Knowledge Systems for Development[2] to address the issues raised by the Committee of Experts for Public Administration, as well as those of knowledge governance and the impact of knowledge on governance. The meeting also represented the first activity on this subject of the newly constituted Knowledge Management Branch and what will be the beginning of a broader programme dedicated to these important issues. In addition, the issue of knowledge in the public sector was considered in the *2003 World Public Sector Report: e-Government at the Crossroads*.[3] The present paper reflects the discussions at the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting as well as the key messages concerning knowledge as contained in the *2003 World Public Sector Report*.

II. Introduction

4. The knowledge society and the role of the public sector in its development is a critical area of study. The idea of knowledge development as an important element of governance is certainly not new. However, knowledge has assumed an even greater degree of relevance as well as a different shape with the advent and deepening of the knowledge economy and society. There are multiple drivers of this phenomenon, among them the way in which society is becoming more complex and unpredictable in both positive and challenging ways. The manifestations of such changes are found, for example, in globalization, the economic value of ideas, global production chains, the demographics of youth, challenges to political systems

and recent rapid developments in science and technology, including information and communication technologies (ICTs).

5. These new imperatives demand responses that are more creative, innovative, intelligent, and more active in their use of knowledge. Yet while we often have an abundance of information, there is equally often a pronounced deficit of knowledge, or at least a deficit in our ability to create, use and apply it meaningfully.

6. With the Millennium Declaration as a framework for the knowledge society, Governments and the international community must seek to determine those knowledge-related activities and policy decisions that add public value and result in the meaningful utilization of knowledge throughout the whole of society. The philosophy of the Millennium Declaration and its specific benchmarks also compel us to examine questions such as "How can all benefit from the knowledge society?" and "How can its impact be felt across multiple spheres?"

7. However, these general goals and recommendations must be translated into more concise, though flexible, conceptual frameworks, implementable policy and concrete actions. How this is to be accomplished remains somewhat vague, and most certainly complex. There is thus a need to further clarify and make more tangible the concepts and practicalities of the knowledge society, especially taking into consideration the lessons learned to date by those around the world seeking to realize its potential. In that context, the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting focused on four primary topics: theoretical and historical underpinnings of the knowledge society; national knowledge systems; measurement of knowledge assets; and knowledge in the public sector. While prescriptive solutions were not provided, additional questions were raised which suggested a refocusing of the discussion on the role of the public sector in the knowledge society and the basis for further research. The *World Public Sector Report* likewise emphasized the networked government, management of information and creation of knowledge as the most important e-government applications of the future.

III. A new vision of the knowledge society

8. Every society has always been a knowledge society, in the sense that it has been using knowledge, formally and informally, in economic growth and in social development. However, the ICT revolution at the end of twentieth century has revamped the ways in which knowledge can be created, harvested, assembled, combined, manipulated, enhanced and channelled. This has increased the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of knowledge in economic growth and development, to the extent that knowledge is becoming the leading factor for adding value and for wealth creation in the market economy. In the current knowledge age, intellect and creative, innovative ideas have become a primary source of advantage. These factors also carry the promise of dramatically advancing human development and increasing the quality of life.

9. At the same time, while the creation and use of knowledge has accelerated, ethics have experienced difficulty in catching up. Unless the creation and use of knowledge is put in the framework of the desired societal context, that of human development, and supported by shared values, the increased impact of knowledge that serves its own agenda, or a particular market agenda, or particular political agenda, will shape the societal context on its own. This can prove counterproductive

from the point of view of quality of life of all people everywhere. As the march towards the global knowledge society progresses, questions are raised concerning the ethical basis of the knowledge society, its current characteristics and attributes, the ends to which knowledge is applied, cultural and value shifts, the ability of a society to participate in shaping the knowledge agenda, and to what degree dominant frameworks are compatible with the Millennium Declaration framework.

10. Upon consideration of many of these issues, the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting largely found existing concepts and frameworks lacking and concluded that a new vision of the knowledge society was warranted.

11. Many discussions of the knowledge society tend to concentrate on the more one-dimensional, but still important, knowledge economy. Historically and in the West, the progress of the knowledge society is largely seen through the lens of economic development and increased productivity. Indeed, this leaves out other facets of knowledge and its application within society, as well as the "human dimension". Moreover, it was felt that explanations of the knowledge society in terms of traditional economics was restrictive and did not properly take into account the unique dynamics and features of knowledge as distinct from standard goods and services. Knowledge largely does not obey economic models developed for the industrial era. The value of knowledge and the combination of factors and ideas is exponentially increased and not linear in nature (1 mind plus 1 mind does not equal 2 minds, but can equal hundreds of new ideas). Indeed, there was a strong call for new definitions and theories to explain the knowledge society that are interdisciplinary in nature.

12. When speaking of the knowledge society, one often hears of "transitions" to and from certain states of its development. Yet knowledge as a whole is not something that exists in some places and not in others. It is not the monopoly of the North or the West. And the knowledge society, while it has certain signposts, does not have definitive goalposts. Indeed, it is not something that a country transitions into as such.

13. It has become evident that these very prevalent frameworks do not provide an entirely accurate description of the state of knowledge capacities within societies, nor are they reflective of the depth, breadth and complexities of the knowledge society. Rather, it has been recommended that an alternative vision of the knowledge society should be adopted, one predicated upon the following values, principles and understandings:

- All societies are knowledge societies.
- Knowledge societies should seek to maximize human development.
- The knowledge society should espouse the values of openness, diversity, tolerance and inclusiveness, as well as respect creativity and accept some uncertainty.
- The knowledge society is highly dynamic.
- It is necessary to find common ground between the "I" (advancing the individual) and the "We" (advancing the community) approaches to knowledge society development.

- Knowledge societies should maximize public value (versus rent-seeking in the public sector or pure private value).
- Knowledge societies depend on embracing different types and forms of knowledge from varied sources.
- Social knowledge is as important as economic or productive knowledge.
- It should be recognized that knowledge is political.
- Governance of the knowledge society and policy matter.
- Ethics and the attempt to prevent misuse and abuse must be better addressed.

Reframing the debate on the knowledge society in these terms focuses discussion on the human dimensions, on a more holistic vision of where we want to go that is consistent with the Millennium Declaration, and it certainly has implications for the practical steps in how to get there.

IV. The public sector in the knowledge society

14. The paper entitled "Capacity of the public sector to support the creation and application of knowledge, innovation and technology for development",[4] presented to the Committee of Experts at its first meeting, in 2002, outlined many of the roles of the public sector in advancing knowledge, innovation and technology. The Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Knowledge Systems for Development provided an opportunity to reflect on these roles and examine specific approaches being taken. As a result of those deliberations, and taking into account the research and recommendations contained in the *2003 World Public Sector Report*, an enhanced role for the public sector has emerged which includes the creation of effective governance mechanisms and public spaces for knowledge development, the development of policies towards knowledge acceleration, and more pronounced utilization of knowledge in the public sector. Moreover, the public sector and policy makers are now also responsible for internalizing and promoting the new vision of the knowledge society and ensuring that the national agenda and goals are aligned with this framework.

A. Governance of the knowledge society

15. In attempting to move from broader ethical frameworks to concrete reality, the issue of governance of the knowledge society, the perspective of the creation, exchange and utilization of knowledge, must be addressed. As "one size fits all" models are not appropriate for development in general and the development of the knowledge society in particular, it will be necessary to establish various structures of knowledge governance which are responsive to local needs and conditions and result in nationally appropriate policies and priorities.

16. The expert group meeting emphasized that the knowledge society must have in place a sound system of governance that adequately allows for competing values to be heard, acted upon and integrated into official policy. This is critical given that consensus may be difficult to achieve and different parts of society will have divergent views of what constitutes valuable knowledge. Governance frameworks

should also respond to questions of what aspects of the knowledge society can and should be governed (e.g. economic, cultural and social elements), who decides on priorities, what are the channels of participation, how are societies' transaction costs determined, how is funding allocated and the like. However, another function of such a knowledge governance framework would be to help ensure that public value, as opposed to private value or elite public value, is captured.

17. Though the meeting did not discuss in depth the specifics of knowledge governance, several factors were highlighted which warrant greater study in the future. The critical importance of institutions in the knowledge governance process was cited. Institutions can be formal or informal, political or social. The formal and political types of institutions play myriad roles, from developing infrastructure to setting/enabling policy, conditions and incentive systems, to making available public stores of information, to investing in research, development and education. However, it remains questionable whether these traditional functions are adequate for the demands of the present day and the emerging knowledge society. Indeed, new imperatives have arisen which require a greater flexibility and responsiveness of these institutions. Also, with a new multidisciplinary knowledge theory, as called for above, and against a background of the experience with multisectoral knowledge policies, it is evident that new or enhanced mechanisms of institutional coordination and collaboration should be sought. Further, in a globalized world, greater efforts need to be made at connecting the national with the international governance regimes and institutions. Examples of institutions meeting this new reality, the conditions under which they have been successful, and how social and informal institutions, existing as well as new ones, support and direct the development of the knowledge society should be further explored.

18. In addition to addressing the necessary institutional development and capacity-building, there is also a need to concentrate on the role of the individual and civil society in the governance of the knowledge society. It is widely recognized that much knowledge resides within the individual. Additionally, in terms of determining the direction of the knowledge society within the human development framework, the participation of the public is indispensable. Knowledge processes should support what people want, as opposed to what is good for a single subsector, via definition, examination, challenge to and possible adjustment of purpose. Therefore, new channels should be sought for the individual to participate as a social citizen and to play various roles such as that of producer, end-user, mediator and decision maker. This raises issues of the democratization of the knowledge society and the need for the creation of a public space where citizens can contribute to "politically useful knowledge".

19. Knowledge networking as one form of governance has been proposed as a means of meeting the institutional and participation challenges, as well as becoming philosophically aligned with the proposed vision of the knowledge society. Networking is seen as a means to engage the local and the grass roots, to communicate tacit knowledge, encourage democratic debate and lead to the creation of new coalitions of partners and collaboration. It can potentially represent a model of inclusiveness and better capture social and cultural processes of knowledge development, utilization and dissemination. Examples of networking abound, but questions remain as to how they are connected to policy-making and implementation. However, with regard to knowledge dissemination and education,

and especially where the infrastructure does not yet support networking, traditional media should not be marginalized.

20. In the final analysis, how a society organizes itself and how these institutions are developed and an inclusive governance architecture is constructed will likely depend upon political processes and decisions — and ultimately, upon the will of key stakeholders. Moreover, issues of the rule of law, trust in government and other fundamentals of good governance cannot be ignored.

B. Policies towards the acceleration of the knowledge society

21. Under the proposition that all societies are knowledge societies, nations may be differentiated according to their rate of creation, dissemination and utilization of knowledge (explicit and tacit) and broadly categorized as: regressing — societies organized not to know; stagnating — societies that are chaotic, random or accidental in their organization; and advancing — societies that are organized for acceleration. Recently, with the application of ICT, the rate of acceleration has increased exponentially, so that a qualitative gap has developed between those societies that organize to know (and use what they know) and the rest. At a point still difficult to define, they start to appear and behave differently, hence the illusion that they and only they are the "knowledge societies" or that they and only they are "advanced" in the process of "transition" to it. However, a knowledge society is not a phase of development that should be achieved, proclaimed as a success and protected. With human creativity at its basis, it can be a process that can advance and even accelerate endlessly.

22. It has always been possible to regulate the rate of production, distribution and utilization of knowledge in part by adopting appropriate policies and practices. Such policies demarcate the space in which creativity can flourish and in which the broadly understood cost of knowledge is low and falling. Policies can either expand this space or shrink it. At the national level, the knowledge society also manifests itself in a variety of actors, goals, institutions, partnerships, processes and systems or dynamics.[5] Furthermore, there are a number of disciplines that arguably fall under the knowledge rubric: education, science and technology, research and development, innovation, economics, information policy, human rights, promotion of culture, and the social and political systems within which knowledge is embedded and which will either support or hinder the meaningful development of the knowledge society. Ultimately, Governments will have an instrumental role in creating an environment that adequately addresses these issues.

23. The public sector's formulation and implementation of strategy, policy, programmes and partnerships will to a large extent determine the success of a nation in the creation and purpose-driven use of knowledge. The knowledge assets of a nation must be placed in a creative and growth-enhancing environment that brings added value: in business, in politics, in social life in general. Moreover, the full spectrum of a society's ability to generate, access, disseminate, appropriate, adopt, adapt and manipulate knowledge must be taken into consideration and appropriate actions taken towards those ends. One such step is the creation of strategies and systems for capturing the benefits of knowledge for development. Such strategies comprise common understandings of the concept of knowledge for development, goals, policies, modalities and, eventually, the strategic allocation of resources. The

policies must be rooted in the social and cultural environment and must be aligned with and make sense from the point of view of the goals. For example, if networks are pivotal, consideration must be given to the technical and regulatory environments to be established for them. Systems, processes and institutions fall under the category of modalities and must assure effective and efficient pursuit of the adopted goals in a given policy or regulatory framework.

24. To date, national responses to the knowledge society have been somewhat "hit-and-miss", and indeed, there is no science to the development of national knowledge strategies. The expert group meeting highlighted the types of policies and practices which can support the acceleration of the knowledge society. Some examples follow:

- A single cohesive approach to a knowledge strategy that encompasses all aspects of the knowledge society remains elusive and may not be practical. Policy and strategy should be realistic and accompanied by a strong implementation plan.
- Understanding the dynamics between and connecting different sectors and policies through integrated frameworks is as important as developing and implementing sectoral policy.
- Niche identification in knowledge production and contextualization of knowledge policy and practices is essential, as is learning — not copying — from other countries facing similar conditions.
- In addition to considering knowledge for economic production, policies should focus on sectors and industries that promote other forms of creativity and innovation.
- Tradeoffs of knowledge-related policies (stability vs. adaptability, access to knowledge vs. privacy) should be addressed and negative effects ameliorated.
- Policies concerning access, use and effective use should be further distinguished.
- Access costs to knowledge, be they technical, institutional, cultural or the like, will help determine the progress of the knowledge society.
- The competence of individuals, the private sector and the public sector to create, disseminate and use knowledge and to develop and implement knowledge policy should be a central focus.
- Enhancement of creative thinking and learning is essential.
- Foresight policies and anticipation of future knowledge demands are important to acceleration.

Further research is needed on the degree to which most national approaches are in fact meeting these objectives.

25. In considering the variables that might constitute elements of a national knowledge system, the meeting also examined whether there are possibilities for measuring knowledge assets at the national level and developing an understanding of where a society is accelerating from. Efforts to benchmark and measure national knowledge assets and capacities may better direct policy and practical interventions towards acceleration.

26. There are multiple methodologies available for measuring knowledge assets, some of which have made efforts at capturing national-level and public-sector aspects of the knowledge society, and many of which take a firm-level or private-sector approach. However, if a new vision of the knowledge society is being promoted and new theories and definitions are being proposed, measurement methodologies should reflect these frameworks. In line with the human development rubric of the knowledge society, methodologies should first determine what variables are worth measuring and what can be measured (whether, for instance, tacit knowledge and knowledge dynamics are measurable). Methodologies might attempt to assess the feasibility of measuring the rate at which societies are accelerating and the expansion of the public space for knowledge creation as key indicators of progress.

C. Knowledge in the public sector

27. Government is an organization. It has specific functions that include consolidating and expressing the consensus view of the sovereign; responding with solutions to the needs, demands and proposals contained in the consensus; and making itself transparent to the oversight body acceptable to the sovereign. At the same time, government consumes anywhere between 20 per cent and 50 per cent of gross national product and its actions and behaviour have a profound impact on the way in which people live and work. Moreover, government is a large consumer and producer of knowledge. Over the past 10 years, Governments have begun to introduce ICT into their operations. These applications are focused heavily on raising internal administrative efficiency and effectiveness; on smoothing the process of providing services to the consumers of public services; and specifically, on public administration's support to business activities. While commendable in their intent and initial impact, these developments have little in common with Governments' perception of themselves as actual or potential "knowledge organizations" that focus on the harvesting, creation and use of knowledge (as distinct from information) in ways that benefit the discharge of all three of their main functions. Despite the differences between public administration and business in terms of their objectives, public administrations at all levels, not unlike in business organizations, are finding it necessary to revamp their internal structures and seek out sources of tacit or explicit knowledge that reside within as well as outside these administrations. A Government that channels knowledge to its operations, including decision-making, policy formulation and implementation, enhanced and interdisciplinary service delivery, is yet to be fully developed, but the challenges and opportunities as well as the underlying principles and basic directions of this development may already be discerned. Some Governments, among them many States members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, have already begun to pay greater attention to how knowledge differs from both traditional e-government initiatives and from information, as well as how it can best be captured, transmitted and used.

28. From the point of view of Governments, the chief benefits to be gained from employing knowledge more effectively and instituting knowledge management in the public sector include improvements in: organizational memory, learning, transfer of expertise, integrating information from the outside (including from citizens), planning, decision-making, public services, empowerment of civil servants,

efficiency, transparency, horizontal cooperation and the attractiveness of public organizations.

29. However, implementation has posed a number of challenges and many expectations have still not been met. Experience to date has yielded a number of lessons and challenges:

- Public sector management and knowledge management should be considered together.
- Developing a common understanding of knowledge management and identifying different types of knowledge, as well as different government functions and processes, for example, recurrent administrative, individual decision-making and democratic deliberation, and how they can be integrated is fundamental to any knowledge management scheme.
- Information and knowledge should be seen as a public resource.
- Government agencies tend to be unaware of the rich knowledge they possess and lack the understanding that government workers are knowledge workers.
- Knowledge is not generally viewed as an asset by many government agencies.
- In terms of implementation, support of management, adequate funding and accountability are critical and generally government-wide knowledge management efforts fare better.
- It has been found that the greater stability of an organization supports knowledge management efforts.
- Knowledge management is not about technology.
- The privacy and security implications of knowledge management must be addressed.
- There still remains a significant challenge in converting knowledge into action.
- Culture, long-term commitment and adaptivity are more important than knowledge management labels.

30. The *World Public Sector Report*, in considering knowledge management and the implications of increased knowledge flows for the processes and functions of governing, noted that:

> "When the problem context lacks structure and the certainty of outcomes, decision makers tend to rely on tacit, intuitive knowledge. In the vast majority of societies these days ... the environment for life and work lacks structure or certainty of causes or outcomes ... such an environment ... creates ... many unknown variables. All this creates the permanent demand for knowledge ... Under-delivery of knowledge is bound to negatively impact people's well-being. Conversely, increased delivery of knowledge constitutes a very important public value.
>
> "... Governments must organize for knowledge creation and knowledge-sharing. This would involve change, as any bureaucracy monopolizes and centralizes knowledge and tends to push it upward in the organization instead of making it widely available ... People must trust their Government to do the right thing. Knowledge informs such decisions.

"In the context of organizational change, Governments can use ICT to organize for knowledge creation and knowledge delivery. This is yet another critical e-government application.

"...

"The best to be found in the literature concerning knowledge creation and distribution allows the formulation of several broad principles that a Government should adopt or act upon if it intends to generate knowledge. It should:

- Accept that human beings are the storage medium for knowledge
- Accept that knowledge creation has it own dynamic; it cannot be ordered or administered
- Create an organizational context, i.e., set up public shared spaces (physical and/or virtual) with borders of space and time in which people would want — and would have enough trust — to redirect their thinking processes away from the usual mental valleys. This cannot be participation by personal exclusion (naiveté and curiosity are key skills by which one challenges the received wisdom). However, to allow public value creation, private interests would have to be excluded
- Make knowledge creation part of public problem-solving. This involves activating public knowledge-creation spaces by encouraging and facilitating the full circle of knowledge creation ...
- Finally, for greater effect, conjoin these public knowledge-creating spaces (i.e. network)

"Logic dictates that the maximization of knowledge creation would require a multiplication of the shared spaces, their conjoining and the involvement of a maximum number of carriers of knowledge, i.e. people. In organizational terms, this translates into networked government. In the political arena, this translates into genuine participation in the political process."[6]

31. There are other ways in which effective knowledge creation and utilization in the public sector implies change in the way government does business. It has been suggested that successfully using knowledge to improve policy-making and implementation may require more collaborative and multidisciplinary mechanisms for governance across broader "knowledge fields". This may necessitate the development of new governance structures such as multisectoral forums or councils.

32. However, while the role of knowledge in the development and effectiveness of the public sector is multiple, its potential will be severely limited if, at the basis of these initiatives, public-sector reform and a commitment to good governance is not being pursued.

33. Another indirect effect of the knowledge society for governance is that in creating a public space for politically useful knowledge to be exchanged, as called for above, the good governance agenda itself is advanced by encouraging participation and inclusiveness and upholding certain human rights at the national level such as freedom of expression and even international human rights norms such as the right to information. To the extent that knowledge is very localized and

contextual, any effort to properly acquire or tap and distribute it in a meaningful way necessitates greater consideration of decentralization issues, a very important component of good governance reform. Moreover, in actively acquiring knowledge from citizens on a variety of development-related issues, Governments may be better able to more effectively meet the socio-economic Millennium Development Goals.

V. Conclusions/recommendations

34. In accelerating towards a participatory and human-centred knowledge society, there are a number of steps that Governments and entities of the United Nations system can take.

National Governments should actively:

- **Consider and promote the knowledge society in the framework of human development and the Millennium Declaration**
- **Actively pursue appropriate knowledge-related strategies and policies**
- **Maximize public value in developing their knowledge agendas**
- **Create public spaces and mechanisms for participation in the knowledge society**
- **More effectively use knowledge within government processes and integrate knowledge creation, management and utilization with public sector reform and e-government efforts.**

35. In the vast landscape of the knowledge society, both the governance of knowledge and the impact of knowledge on governance are two areas where the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, hopes to contribute to the ongoing debate. The following activities may therefore be usefully pursued in order to create useful analytical frameworks and tools for United Nations Member States:

- **Examination of the nature and prevalence of: policy measures that accelerate the knowledge society; practices and tools that accelerate (institutions, partnerships, diagnostic assessments, learning processes); and skills that accelerate**
- **Examination of the knowledge practices in the public sector that enhance: learning organizations, new structures of collaboration and multidisciplinary policy development and implementation, decentralization, and participation.**

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 24* (E/2002/84), para. 23.

[2] For the report of the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Knowledge Systems for Development, background papers and individual presentations, see www.unpan.org/dpepa-kmb-ksranda.asp. The report itself was issued by the Division for Public Administration and Development of the

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (ST/ESA/PAD/SER.E.58) and is also available online at: http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan014138.pdf

[3] For the online read-only version of the *2003 World Public Sector Report: e-Government at the Crossroads* and publication information, see www.unpan.org/dpepa_worldpareport.asp.

[4] E/C.16/2002/5.

[5] For more details, see E/C.16/2002/5 (see also para. 14 above) and the report of the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Knowledge Systems for Development (see note 2).

[6] *2003 World Public Sector Report* (see note 3 above), pp. 82-83.

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Revitalizing public administration

Strengthening public administration for the Millennium Development Goals: a partnership-building approach

Report of the Secretariat

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 50/225 on public administration and development, emphasized the centrality of partnership between the public sector and public institutions, both political and executive, and the private sector and civil society as a vehicle in support of the development process. Since then, the call for enhanced partnerships has been reinvigorated and strengthened at all major international forums, including at the Millennium Summit and in the Millennium Declaration (2000). In the most recent triennial policy review of operational activities in 2002, the General Assembly went a step further by adopting a recommendation that the United Nations development system should assist national Governments in creating an enabling environment in which the links and partnerships in the development process would be strengthened. The key underpinning of partnerships for the United Nations system are shared values, goals and responsibilities, as enshrined in the Charter and reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration and its aftermath. Both the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey in 2002, and the World Summit for Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in 2002, amplified the Millennium Declaration and reaffirmed that partnerships, at both the country as well as at the international level, are key to pursuing the Millennium Development Goals. At the international

* E/C.16/2004/1.

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level, concerted efforts are under way to secure partnerships to increase both the quality as well as the quantity of official development assistance (ODA), while at the national level a different type of partnership, with both the private sector and civil society organizations, is needed in order to achieve the Goals, especially the important goals of faster economic growth and poverty reduction. In many countries where a variety of partnerships have been forged, especially with the private sector, the results have been mixed. Among other things, lack of suitable negotiation skills and inadequate market conditions have rendered some of these partnerships less productive and, therefore, less conducive to growth. In spite of this, it is the latter that is being put forward as the main raison d'être for private/public partnership. The partnerships with non-government organizations (NGOs), civil society and public administration/citizens dialoguing for pro-poor policies are on the increase, although the value of this new methodology has yet to be fully appreciated either by Governments or the political leadership, especially the latter. On the side of the public administration, the values, attitudes and skills for carrying on dialogue with citizens, and in the case of the private sector, the skills in negotiation, need to be changed and improved; on the side of the citizens' groups, similar changes are also warranted.

Partnerships with civil society organizations and citizens' groups are crucial for local-level realization of the Millennium Development Goals as well as implementation of other dominant poverty reduction strategies, including the poverty reduction strategy papers of the World Bank. These partnerships need to be further strengthened by a greater measure of accountability and transparency, which will help regain public confidence and support for governmental policies and commitments. The United Nations system is committed to supporting national Governments in empowering public administration to play a vital role in accountable partnerships and to partnering for the Millennium Development Goals and the subsequent international commitments.

I. Context

1. General Assembly resolution 50/225 on public administration and development emphasized the centrality of partnership of the public sector with the private sector and civil society as vehicle for growth and pro-poor development.[1] Since then, the call for enhanced partnerships has been reinvigorated and strengthened at all major international forums, including at the Millennium Summit in 2000. In the most recent triennial policy review of operational activities for the development of the United Nations system in 2002, the General Assembly went a step further with its strong recommendation that the United Nations development system should assist national Governments in creating an enabling environment, in which partnerships as a form of socio-economic governance that link the national Governments, the United Nations development system, civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector are emphasized.[2]

2. The call for partnerships by the United Nations system and its development partners remained a major agenda item at all international conferences and global summits of the 1990s, including those on education, gender, the environment, children, social development and human settlements, which culminated in the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in 2000 and the promotion of the Millennium Development Goals. General Assembly resolution 55/2, which contains the Millennium Declaration adopted by 147 heads of State and 189 Member States, is by far the most significant partnership sought by the Organization over discrete, numerical and time-bound development objectives.

3. The description, analysis and recommendations presented in this paper are a continuation of an earlier dialogue initiated by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, and continued at its second meeting in New York, held from 7 to 11 April 2003. In its report entitled "Mainstreaming poverty reduction strategies within the Millennium Development Goals: the role of public administration" (E/C.16/2003/5), the Committee made the case that without strong and effective institutional structures and conducive partnerships, the likelihood of successfully achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially target 1 of Goal 1 — the reduction of extreme poverty by half by 2015 — was regarded as low.[3] It was argued that weak and inadequately partnered institutions, by definition, could not be relied upon to develop strategies and policies conducive to the achievement of the Goals. To the contrary, and by implication, weak or non-partnered institutions, both public as well as political, were likely to be a major obstacle to driving, monitoring, partnering and implementing the strategies and policies vital to the achievement of the Goals. Capacity deficits and non-partnered institutions are also barriers to transparency and accountability, making these institutions less effective in delivering quality services at the grass-roots level. Furthermore, partnerships also have the capacity to enhance the knowledge base, an important but often a less prioritized capital for policy development.

4. Two levels of partnerships, at both the national and at the international levels, are vital for supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. At the national level, partnerships are needed for the mobilization of the governmental and non-governmental resources vital to ensuring sustained economic growth and poverty reduction. Partnerships at the national level are equally important for informed decision-making for pro-poor policies and strategies and ensuring transparency and accountability in public expenditure. Furthermore, partnerships

that produce improved accountability and transparency in public expenditure limit wastage, promote savings and thus, by implication, have the capacity to enlarge the domestic resource base from within.

5. At the international level, partnerships for mobilization of resources and for the establishment of a fair trade regime (the latter to help the developing countries to earn and generate more resources from within) are a sine qua non for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The world leaders recognized these needs. Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals specifies global partnerships for development as an important support element of the other seven goals, and specifically of target 1 of Goal 1, the reduction of extreme poverty by half by 2015.

6. In 2002, total annual net official development assistance (ODA) to all developing countries was $57 billion. The additional annual requirements have been estimated at $50 billion.[4] This is assuming that developing countries adopt sound policies and maximize use of domestic resources. In terms of an increase in gross national income (GNI), it implies an augmentation of ODA from the current 0.23 per cent to about 0.44 per cent of GNI. Hence, although short of the 0.7 per cent of GNI that developed countries are committed to allocate to ODA, a doubling of ODA from current levels will be necessary for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

7. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly made it clear that ODA is not sufficient and that, therefore, domestic resources as well as partnerships with the private sector will remain the primary driving force for development. However, as far as the latter is concerned, while current experience suggests that many parties have benefited from partnerships with the private sector, especially in infrastructure development, there are also cases where such partnerships, sought within a governance environment (that is, weak accountability and transparency arrangements) and non-competitive market conditions, including weak negotiating skills on the side of the public administration, seemed to have led to unhelpful outcomes. In some cases, these partnerships were sought without due regard for a well-grounded poverty reduction strategy. There are instances where these partnerships generated neither sustained economic growth nor reduced poverty. In many cases, they led to the opposite result. Therefore, when setting up private/public partnerships, it is important first to answer some basic questions, such as with whom they should be established, for what purpose and in what way they will impact upon poverty. An institutional framework to deal with partnerships in an accountable and transparent manner and an enabling environment that is conducive to competitiveness should first be put in place to ensure that these partnerships become cost-effective and productive. In addition, it is important that economic growth sought through private/public partnerships is underpinned by a well-grounded poverty reduction strategy.

8. A recent survey has revealed that the South-East Asian countries that grew at an annual rate of 6 per cent during the 1990s were able to reduce poverty from 28 to 14 per cent during the same period, a reduction of 50 per cent. In contrast, the South Asian countries that grew at a slightly lesser growth rate (4 per cent per annum) during the same period reduced poverty at a much slower rate, 2 per cent per annum, indicating a much less dynamic capacity to reduce poverty in those countries. These

are important lessons that must be kept in mind while strategizing private sector-led growth. It is important, in seeking private/public partnerships, that economic growth strategies be pro-poor.

9. In addition to forging private/public partnerships for the mobilization of capital for investment and growth, other forms of partnership that are more citizen-based and that can ensure a more accountable and transparent use of resources seem to ensure greater resource mobilization from within. This particular partnership potential, which has the capacity to expand the resource base from within, has been given significantly less attention than it deserves.

10. Empowerment of stakeholders, which includes citizens' participation and transparency of the process of pursuing the Millennium Development Goals, is at the core of both pro-poor growth and the generation of domestic resources vital for supporting a growth strategy. These elements, which are citizen-based and inclusive, constitute the key components of what is commonly known as, "good governance".

11. One of the key elements of "good governance" is a decision-making framework that forges intra-governmental as well as governmental/non-governmental partnerships, or the formation of a "joined-up government". A "joined-up government" is a government that links up both within and beyond and both vertically and horizontally. In pursuing a "joined-up" strategy, many countries are now encouraging citizens' participation in such hitherto restricted domains as fiscal policy processes in order to help formulation of fiscal policies that are inclusive and, most importantly, pro-poor. Some countries are also encouraging citizens' participation in monitoring public service delivery, especially at the local government level through what has come to be known as the "citizens scorecard system".

12. In summary, while partnerships for resource mobilization at the international level should continue, and while the United Nations system must continue to play an important role in these initiatives, similar attention should also be given by national Governments to looking at options that can help securing and enlarging resources at the domestic level.

II. The template

A. Revisiting fundamentals

13. It has been suggested that the Millennium Declaration and the associated Millennium Development Goals marked a watershed in global partnership and a reaffirmation of the Charter of the United Nations as it responds to the concerns of the new century. The concerns, as encapsulated by the original eight Millennium Development Goals and 18 targets, have been embraced and reaffirmed at subsequent conferences and summits, including the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit for Sustainable Development. At the global level, the custodian of the Millennium Development Goal process is the United Nations Development Group. Members of the Group provide policy and programme support to some 150 countries, jointly mobilizing and deploying resources in excess of $5 billion. There are three main pillars of the Development Group that drive the strategy and advocate for the Millennium Development Goals:

- The Millennium Project, which analyses policy options and is charged with developing a plan on how to implement and achieve the Millennium Development Goals[5]
- The Millennium Campaign, which mobilizes political support for the Millennium Declaration
- The operational country level activities, coordinated across the agencies and programmes of the United Nations system by the United Nations Coordinator, which help to mobilize resources and support countries in implementing policies necessary for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

14. Both the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development amplified the goals set in the Millennium Declaration and reaffirmed that partnerships are key to pursuing their objectives in a globalizing world. Hence, though maintaining the original template of the Millennium Declaration, subsequent conferences and summits forged additional partnerships and a coalition of networks to leverage the value of their commitments and activities.[6]

15. The following are regarded as the key components of a poverty reduction strategy:

- Ensuring support for economic and social initiatives that have a core focus on poverty reduction
- Strengthening capabilities to provide basic social services
- Assisting capacity-building for poverty assessment, monitoring and planning
- Supporting the partnerships among Governments, civil society and the private sector for the mobilization of resources. For such partnerships to be productive, a good governance arrangement, where power is shared equitably and decisions are made in an accountable and transparent manner, is important

16. These strategies, both explicitly and implicitly, require partnerships, a proactive public administration and political leadership that can provide unstinting support to the commitments made in the Millennium Development Goals and can take initiatives to mainstream the Goals within national priorities and development programmes. Similar initiatives are also needed to put in place an institutional framework, a framework of partnership, that can drive the two key elements of Millennium Development Goals: sustained economic growth and poverty reduction. In this regard, the roles of the United Nations Coordinator and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) are key in ensuring the kind of partnership, based on universal values and trust, that is needed to build on the achievements to date and maintain momentum. The UNDAF process, which is a partnership at the country level, is predicated on the specific mandates and relative competencies of the participating agencies of the United Nations system. The country common assessment (CCA) is the analytical and thematic tool that provides the necessary inputs for the UNDAF process. Agencies and departments of the United Nations without field representation, such as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, are, in principle, represented in these initiatives by the office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator. However, owing to financial constraints, and by virtue of not being physically present, the UNDAF process, more often than not, is carried out by the representatives of the United Nations system in-country,

with only the occasional call for support from United Nations agencies or departments without field representation. This gap in the support to the UNDAF process, though not a major drawback to its work, does imply that individual countries cannot easily avail themselves of the expertise and professional services available within the United Nations system at large, including the United Nations Secretariat, with its depository of interregional experience and first-hand knowledge of the outcome of intergovernmental processes.

17. In order to ensure implementation of the Millennium Development Goals at the country level, it was necessary that they be partnered with other major initiatives, including the poverty reduction strategy paper process of the World Bank. The poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) are primarily a short- and a medium-term programming tool linked to financial targets and the budget, while the Millennium Development Goals are longer-term goals, linked to the strategic economic, social and environmental needs of countries. The difference, however, is not purely one of time horizon, but also of breadth of vision, required participation and institutional requirements. PRSPs are primarily focused on sound macroeconomic management and economic growth, while Millennium Development Goals, through targets and indicators, explicitly encompass a much greater universe of social and economic values. PRSPs are sometimes regarded as the tail end of the structural adjustment process of the 1980s and 1990s, when prudent macroeconomic management and fiscal balances took precedence over other considerations. Hence, the localization of the Millennium Development Goals and their partnering with PRSPs is a delicate process and one that requires the strengthening of public administration to respond to the task.

18. Increasingly, strengthening public administration necessitates empowering the service recipients or constituents of public services. It has been found that community and civil society participation, so vitally important to the PRSP process, is on occasion inadequate or flawed.[7] This is not surprising if the communities themselves, and the civil society organizations representing them, are not technically equipped to appraise the proposals contained in the PRSPs. Furthermore, if decentralization is a means of spreading good governance and accountability, the question arises as to whether civil society, and especially rural communities, are sufficiently informed and prepared to effectively participate. Accountability implies that civil society representatives should not only be consulted but also have the right to monitor the progress of initiatives and, most importantly, remain part and parcel of the final decision-making process.

19. Traditionally, partnerships and interaction between the public and private sectors in developing countries were essentially one-way relationships, involving learning from the private sector and the corporatization of the public sector, including attempts to introduce private corporate culture into public service. These approaches, referred to by some as "new public management", emphasized, inter alia, strategic planning, performance management, accountability, results, purchaser/provider split, contracting out and "doing more with less" initiatives. Consistent with private sector principles and practices, the public was identified as, "consumers with the ability to choose and complain although not the ability to proactively shape services". In many countries with developing economies, given the institutional weaknesses of the States (and that of the international funding and donor agencies), the managerial reforms and the private/public partnerships that were introduced produced less than optimum results. These weaknesses, which were

endemic to public institutions, seemed to have rendered the private/public partnerships in the production of public goods less tenable, especially from the equity perspective. Others claimed that the market-managerial approach to resource mobilization and economic development also seemed to have failed "to deliver on its central claim to lower costs per (constant) unit of service". These realizations have prompted a rethinking of public/private partnerships. It is now recognized that both the State and the private sector have their distinct and mutually respective spheres of interest and activities and that even in market economies the private sector alone cannot be relied on to deliver all developmental needs, especially the Millennium Development Goals, nor can it guarantee cost-effectiveness in the delivery of all services. In the sphere of public or social goods, including education, health, the physical environment, water and sanitation, the role of the public sector is indispensable. What is crucial is to find out the right role for the right partner and to find a strategic framework within which the partnership is a mutually reinforcing "joined-up-entity", dedicated to the common goals of growth, quality, cost-effectiveness and equity. An example of a vibrant and productive partnership between the private sector, government and communities is the Guangcai programme for poverty eradication in China, summarized in box 1 below.

Box 1

Guangcai programme for poverty eradication — China

The Guangcai programme, coordinated by the China Society for Promoting the Guangcai Programme (CSPGP), was initiated in 1994 by Chinese entrepreneurs to invest, for profit, in poverty stricken areas in China. There are various stakeholders involved, including the central and local government authorities, not-for-profit organizations, the private sector, farmers and other beneficiaries. Originally the programme expected to create 10 projects, develop 10 different sources of funds and train 100 micro-entrepreneurs annually. The achievements of the programme have far surpassed the original targets and expectations. By 2003, more than 10,000 projects had been created, resulting in approximately 4.5 million people being lifted out of poverty. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, though not a funding organization, supported these efforts in a modest way through co-organizing, with CSPGP, technical cooperation workshops, as well as by inviting CSPGP technical cooperation in activities implemented by the Department, thus providing CSPGP with exposure to international communities. Leadership and direction rested throughout with the national authorities.

The remarkable success of the Guangcai partnership is attributed to the following:

- The unique framework of partnership forged between investors and beneficiaries, with legally binding contracts on an equal basis to delineate each party's responsibilities, rights and obligations
- The CSPGP has developed a strong and effective nationwide organizational structure, which is supported by political authority, strong networks and a rational and clear decision-making process
- The strong and stable leadership of the CSPGP, headed by capable and motivated individuals who continue to provide effective leadership in strategic and programmatic aspects has been key to its success

Source: Division for Public Administration and Development Management, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

20. In addition, there has been a resurgence of interest in corporate social responsibility, which goes hand in hand with ways of creating partnerships centred on mutually agreed goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals, and in ways of reducing strife, risk and transaction costs in countries with rich natural resources and in communities in danger of being disenfranchised.[8] There is clearly an element of enlightened self-interest in such partnerships, especially in the adoption of corporate social responsibility by the private sector, however it is in areas beyond minimizing risks or involving any perceived hostile attitude towards the corporate sector that such partnerships matter. Co-opting dissent alone cannot serve as the basis of partnerships, especially those between the private sector and civil society, unless they are based on mutuality of interests and are accountable. To encourage good corporate social responsibility, it is equally important for the public sector to put in place a regulatory framework for all — the private sector, communities and Government. It is not sufficient to arrive at public-private partnerships without subjecting them to the rules of accountability and public ethics. At the international level, the framework that brings together United Nations agencies, companies, labour and civil society in support of the nine principles encompassing human and labour rights and the environment is the United Nations Global Compact profiled in box 2 below.

Box 2

Partnerships through international voluntarism: the United Nations Global Compact

The Global Compact was announced by the Secretary-General at the World Economic Forum in 1999 and was launched at the Headquarters in July 2000. It brings companies together with United Nations organizations, international labour organizations and civil society bodies to foster partnerships and to build a more inclusive and equitable global marketplace. The Compact calls on companies to embrace nine principles from the areas of human rights, labour and the environment. The nine principles are:

Human rights

- Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights within their sphere of influence
- Make sure they are not complicit in human rights abuses

Labour standards

- Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining
- Elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour
- Effective abolition of child labour
- Eliminate discrimination in respect of employment and occupation

Environment

- Businesses should support a precautionary approach to all environmental matters
- Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility
- Encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies

The Global Compact was created to help organizations redefine their strategies and course of action so that all people, not just a fortunate few, can share the benefits of globalization. In his founding speech in Davos, Switzerland, the Secretary-General observed that if we cannot make globalization work for all, in the end it will work for no one. Since the Compact is a voluntary partnership, employers are encouraged to work in their own ways, and at their own speed, towards embracing, supporting and enhancing these principles in the workplace.

Source: see www.unglobalcompact.org.

B. The challenges

21. As recognized in the Millennium Declaration, the template for the main challenges for the developing countries and countries in transition are the Millennium Development Goals. Progress to date has been uneven. In South-East Asia, including China, and in South Asia, including India, countries are making significant progress, while countries in other regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, are experiencing slower progress. The two reports to date by the Secretary-General have made it clear that weak strategizing combined with inadequate repositioning of public institutions and institutional processes surrounding the Millennium Development Goals have contributed to slow progress in some parts of the developing world.[9] In driving and localizing the Millennium Development Goals and their accompanying processes, public administration may need to ensure the following:

- First, positioning of Millennium Development Goals with parallel and interconnected initiatives, such as the PRSPs, with the purpose of enabling the Millennium Development Goals to be part of overall development agenda of the country without unduly overloading the critical skills of the public sector
- Second, solving how to empower the public sector to be accountable and proactive towards partnerships with the private sector, both the for-profit and the not-for-profit private sector, and with civil society at large[10]
- Third, developing indicators and benchmarks that monitor and measure the value of partnerships for accountability and as case studies of good practice
- Fourth, developing an information base and analytical and programmatic tools in support of Millennium Development Goals at the country level as well as for comparison across regions. To date, considerable work has been done on costing the fiscal implications of Millennium Development Goals for developing countries, but regarding the development of approaches and policy instruments, citizen/government dialoguing for pro-poor budgets, social audits of performance and social impact assessment of expenditure, initiatives are still rare
- Fifth, the UNDAF process is emerging as a powerful programmatic and thematic tool for the United Nations. A periodic monitoring and assessment of the process, and how it fits into the Millennium Development Goal and partnering-for-development objectives of different countries seems warranted
- Sixth, a resource mobilization strategy that helps attracting and securing resources both from within as well as outside and availed in a manner that neither compromises the ultimate objective of all resource use — poverty reduction, nor should such partnerships weaken the aspects of equity and cost-effectiveness in delivery of services

22. Fundamentally, as the road map on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals makes clear, the challenges are twofold: first, States need to demonstrate the political will to carry out the commitments already made and must take the necessary steps to adjust institutions and the decision-making processes accordingly; and second, the capacity of the United Nations to provide space and support to the countries to initiate genuine dialogue and partnerships with developed

countries and with civil society must be renewed. The implications and recommendations flowing from these requirements are set out in the next section.[11]

III. The way forward

23. The value of partnerships in the work of the United Nations is not in dispute. It is enshrined in the Charter and is embraced and reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration. Partnerships of ideas and values have to be tested and informed by deeds and results. In the present century, as evinced by the Millennium Development Goals, the development challenge is not only about the mobilization of resources, however critical this factor is for poverty alleviation, but also about accountable partnerships for sustainable development.

24. Accountability is a core value not only for the immediate task of the Millennium Development Goals, but to regain the trust and support of an empowered civil society that is committed to shared goals and is aware of the responsibilities that drive these commitments. Even the mobilization of resources, the so-called "bottom line", presupposes partnerships and coalitions of partners coming together, as the International Conference on Financing for Development has demonstrated. Box 3 below shows two examples, one from Africa and the other from Asia, of the new kind of partnerships that the United Nations system, and in particular the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, is actively encouraging.

Box 3

Support by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for developmental partnerships

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs supported the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies, a civil society partnership in South Asia, in drafting and implementing the South Asian Citizens' Social Charter. The Centre is a major civil society association that promotes regional cooperation among its members to link up Governments with citizens' perspectives on key policy matters. The support of the Department is expected to strengthen the dialoguing and partnering process between citizens and Governments and help introduce the concept of "engaged governance" as a regular methodology in development management.

In 2003, the Department secured financing from the United Nations Human Security Trust Fund, donated by Japan, to implement a project in the Gambia focusing on water resources and alternative energy supplies for poverty alleviation. The project, established initially for a three-year period, aims to partner selected rural communities and their organizations, including community-based organizations, with government agencies and United Nations-supported expertise in order to improve the water and energy supplies in poorer rural areas. A strength of the project is that it relies considerably on the social capital found in rural communities and combines both commercial and non-commercial activities whose content and combination will be based on community choice and responsibility.

Source: See A/58/52 and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

25. At the national level, accountable partnerships are equally critical not only between government and the international partners, where concerns of asymmetrical power surface from time to time, but also between government, the private sector and civil society. Such partnerships were more difficult to establish during the 1980s and 1990s, when the public sector was derided and its role in development was questioned, if not demonized, although even then there were excellent examples of government and civil society partnerships with impressive results. Critical to the success of such partnerships was the sharing of values and the mobilization of communities, often under conditions that were not the most propitious. The example of combating HIV/AIDS in Uganda, given in box 4 below, showcases the value of partnerships when political commitment and the mobilization of society, including community empowerment, NGO involvement and the support of the international community, can have a decisive impact.[12]

Box 4

Partnerships to fight HIV/AIDS: the case of Uganda

HIV/AIDS was first recognized in Uganda in 1982. By 1993, the country had the highest HIV prevalence rate in the world. Uganda, however, is one of a very few countries that have succeeded in reversing the epidemic. The HIV adult prevalence rate there is estimated to have dropped from over 30 per cent in 1992 to 14 per cent in 1995 to below 8 per cent in 2000. Currently, it is claimed to be 6 per cent and falling.

The Government response to HIV/AIDS epidemic dates back to 1986, when the AIDS Control Programme was created. Subsequently, in 1992, the AIDS Commission was established under the Office of the President. The HIV/AIDS initiatives are embedded in the country's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), which can draw upon debt relief savings obtained through the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.

The Ugandan AIDS Commission has put a partnership and a leadership mobilization strategy in place, involving leaders at all levels. The Uganda Business Council on HIV/AIDS supports the promotion of a prevention and care programme at the workplace. In addition the Uganda Business Coalition and the Network of AIDS Service Organizations have been formed to build capacity and provide technical support and guidance. The United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the HIPC initiative, have provided support and partnering, but the decisive commitments, leadership and mobilization were all nationally led.

Source: UNDP, www.undp.org/hiv/uganda.pdf.

26. The lessons from these experiences is that partnerships should not be formed simply of convenience. Partnerships that enable government and the public sector to mobilize civil society and the private sector have a good chance of producing results and do not break under stress. In order for this to take place, accountability with

regard to the mutuality of interests, including progress and responsibilities that can be monitored and vetted, is indispensable. For example, what is significant about the case of fighting HIV/AIDS in Uganda is that the pandemic, although it affected individuals, was treated as a "reverse" public good. That is, it was realized sufficiently early that the issue of advocacy and prevention was a society-wide as well as a community responsibility and concern. The benefits had positive externalities that went beyond the scope of the individual's health care and material well-being.

27. Regional cooperation and intergovernmental partnerships are increasingly used as a way of localizing the Millennium Development Goals and Millennium Development Goal follow-up, as well as in support of the implementation of international resolutions and commitments, including those arising from the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit for Sustainable Development. To that end, in a relatively short period, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has made impressive strides in forging partnerships across the continent that promote good governance and socio-economic objectives. Other subregional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the East African Community (EAC) have achieved commendable progress on a number of fronts, including tariff harmonization, labour mobility and a cross-border investment code. The business sector and civil society are increasingly being integrated into these initiatives, in particular with regard to corporate responsibility and the rights of vulnerable groups, including women and victims of HIV/AIDS.

28. The interest of Governments and, by extension, public administration in partnerships is twofold: firstly, a direct interest, which helps in the pooling of collective resources (human, financial and technological); and second, in creating an enabling environment for informed decision-making. Traditionally, the role of the government as a partner was rather restricted, and usually confined to public services, including utilities, where the premise of the partnership with the private sector was primarily commercial. Hence, a good number of the partnerships forged during the market liberalization period, especially in Africa, between the public and private sectors were predicated on commercial considerations, basically to fill up resource gaps. Partnerships with civil society organizations were forged with caution, if not with suspicion. The value of social capital and its importance in the socio-economic development of a country was yet to be fully recognized. These two difficulties, namely, the limited orientation of the public sector to the robust scope of partnerships with the private sector, and the limited knowledge on the part of the private sector of the value of social capital as important input for development, acted as barriers to broad-based partnerships.

29. The Millennium Development Goals, and its accompanying process, and other major initiatives, such as the poverty reduction strategy papers of the World Bank, provide a platform for more value-based and equal partnerships where both incentives and rewards are commensurate to the international commitments made and in line with national priorities.

30. It is clear that both the environment or context within which partnerships can be forged and the opportunities for such initiatives, both among traditional partners and for new coalitions, are improving. At the macro level, the spread of democratic principles is a positive underbed that encourages communities and individuals with

shared values to come together to seek improvement in their material and social conditions. Moreover, the increased targeting of goals, such as with the Millennium Development Goals and the PRSPs, which are more issues-based and are holistic in nature, created an enabling environment for partnerships. This evolved context necessitates greater partnering, more collegial dialoguing and multi-criteria policy analysis and advice. The new partnership arrangements require a better informed and more skilled civil society, especially in economic issues. Furthermore, the element of accountability must be an integral part of the process to ensure that the mutual rights and responsibilities of the stakeholders are transparent, well understood and well protected.

31. Small communities, or NGOs active in a community, often do not understand what is at stake, let alone carry on a dialogue with Governments and the representatives of the international financial institutions over macroeconomic strategies and monetary policies that appear distant, yet have the potential to impact their lives in significant ways.[13] Furthermore, consulting communities is not tantamount to actual participation with them, unless such consultations lead to the mainstreaming of views given and a feedback on outcome is provided.[14] Finally, there is the issue of sustainability and the creation of long-term trust in partnerships. Ad hoc or opportunistic partnerships experience limited success, and are hardly sustainable. Moreover, although there are cases of good and productive partnerships, they have not been adequately studied; nor have indicators and the impact of good partnerships been assessed systematically. In both the Millennium Declaration and the meetings and papers of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, it is recognized that this situation needs to change in order to encourage the establishment of sustainable partnerships and the strengthening of their stakeholders in a more systematic way. Positive change can be facilitated by political commitment, by recognizing gaps and challenges and by developing a set of practical recommendations reflecting contemporary concerns and opportunities for public administration.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

32. **The Millennium Declaration has presented the immense challenges and opportunities for the establishment of accountable partnerships by national Governments and the international community. This present report stresses that, although the key challenges with regard to Millennium Development Goals have been clearly understood and articulated by the Member States, the issues that relate to opportunities, especially partnerships, have been less well appreciated.**

33. **At the follow-up meetings to the Millennium Declaration, including the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit for Sustainable Development, the vision of the Declaration has been embraced and the importance of forging new partnerships stressed. The partnerships forged between national Governments and international financial institutions in the previous two decades, the 1980s and 1990s, were often lopsided, with asymmetrical power relations, narrowly based and often unsustainable. The public sector in developing countries is still smarting from the experience and cautious of new initiatives in that direction. However, the**

template for action is now rather different, and it needs to be understood and acted upon.

34. Sustainable partnerships have clear and value-based objectives; they are inclusive, accountable, empower their stakeholders and have a measure of mutuality in their relations; their operating arrangements are transparent and equal.

35. In summary, partnership is regarded both as an output as well as an element of the Millennium Development Goals process. Experience indicates, however, that not all partnerships produce the desired results. In forging partnership, it is crucial to find out what works and what does not. Equally important are the issues of when to forge partnerships, for what purpose and how to make them durable and accountable. To that end, the following recommendations are made for the consideration of the Member States:

(a) Empower public administration through means such as institutional repositioning, capacity-building and skills upgrading to help position Millennium Development Goals in the national context, as part of the national development agenda, alongside major interconnected initiatives such as the poverty reduction strategy papers;

(b) Support Governments and the public sector to act proactively, with accountability, to establish partnerships with the private sector and civil society, and provide support to the latter to effectively engage public administration and the international financial institutions to carry on a collegial dialogue on shared objectives;

(c) Provide support to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process and ensure that its monitoring and assessment of progress is independent, transparent and inclusive. In this regard, ensure that the mandate, competencies and comparative advantage of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is made available and used by the United Nations resident coordinators in support of the UNDAF process and its monitoring and assessment aspects;

(d) Strengthen an enabling environment for partnerships through innovative means, such as a code of accountability, "engaged governance",[15] and provide the necessary skills for Governments and civil society to carry on a more fair, symmetrical and analytical-based dialogue with the other partners, both national and international, for the development, implementation and monitoring of pro-poor strategies and policies;

(e) Develop approaches, methodologies and tools for citizen-based performance monitoring and pro-poor budgeting;

(f) Develop a database on best practices and indicators in support of the needs of public administration and public institutions (including political institutions such as parliamentarians), with particular attention to the role of, and the space for, private/public/civil society in the creation of sustained economic growth underpinned by a pro-poor strategy.

36. In conclusion, it is important to stress that partnership is key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals also requires increased resource mobilization and

productive utilization of those resources. ODA is an important source of resources at the international level. Fair trade deals are another tool for the enhancement of resource availability at the country level.

37. **Efforts at resource mobilization at the international level are ongoing, but somewhat less successful. This report argues that there are real opportunities at the country level to expand resource bases from within, through improved and accountable partnerships, especially with NGOs and civil society organizations. The role of, and the space for, private/public partnerships needs to be examined more carefully, with the primary goals of cost-effectiveness and equity in service delivery. These initiatives in partnerships require that public administration builds its capacity to set the agenda of partnerships and to develop the skills and arrangements relevant to sustaining them.**

38. **The United Nations, and the Committee of Experts on Public Administration in particular, are aware of these needs. The present report is a contribution to the ongoing discussion on how to ensure that the opportunities of partnerships are recognized within the correct context and how national Governments, made up of both legislative as well as executive arms, can be sensitized to these opportunities and assisted in repositioning structures and introducing procedures to pursue these goals more coherently and sensitively.**

Notes

[1] See, in particular, resolution 50/225, para. 7, "... strengthening of partnership of the public sector with the private sector and civil society, as well as providing an enabling environment for private sector activities, as appropriate, ... which supports all phases of the development process as well as the promotion of opportunities for all to participate in all spheres of the public sector".

[2] There are several references in the triennial policy review of the operational activities for the development of the United Nations system, resolution 56/201 to the greater need for partnerships for development both within the United Nations system and with new partners (see, in particular, para. 76). An interesting aspect of the triennial policy review is that it clearly singles out partnerships, as distinct from coordination, as a vehicle for development support. Hence, while the better coordination of activities was the traditional conceived mode, increasingly partnerships between the United Nations system and other development entities are also coming to the fore.

[3] The paper, Mainstreaming poverty reduction strategies within the Millennium Development Goals: the role of public administration (E/C.16/2003/5) concluded "Many of these challenges though immense are not insurmountable. Weak institutional structures and inadequate capacities of the key stakeholders are the fundamental base where these challenges reside ... Weak institutions make poor partners, have inadequate links with their constituents, and are unable to make effective use of advice sought". Although the paper dealt with primarily with poverty reduction, its applicability was wider, encompassing all Millennium Development Goals and the need for partnerships in public administration.

[4] See A/58/323, para. 69 and annex, para. 33.

[5] The Millennium Project team were part co-authors of the UNDP *Human Development Report 2003*, on the theme "Millennium Development Goals: A compact among nations to end poverty". Both the *Human Development Report 2003*, and the Economic and Social Council report (E/C.16/2003/5), presented by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration during its second meeting in April 2003, provide a detailed description of the background and workings of the various United Nations system agencies partnering the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals.

[6] For example, as the report on follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development (A/57/319) makes clear, the Monterrey conference was unique in bringing both the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations system closer together, as well as in forging new partnerships with a number of organizations, including the European Union and national Governments committed to increasing their official development assistance (ODA) contributions.

[7] For a candid and critical review of participation in PRSP process, see "Participation in poverty reduction strategy papers", a retrospective study, World Bank, January 2002. This review by Bank staff, includes a summary of external assessment of participation in PRSPs carried out by a number of non-Bank institutions, including civil society organizations.

[8] At the international level a pioneering initiative to this end is the United Nations Global Compact announced by the Secretary-General at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January 1999, and launched at the United Nations in July 2000. The Global Compact is not a regulatory instrument, but a network and partnership among companies, labour and civil society, based on nine principles that encompass human rights, labour and the environment. To date, over a thousand entities, worldwide, have joined the Compact. The Compact has a very active web site and Internet portal, including documentation, initiatives and partnerships formed, which can be accessed at www.unglobalcompact.org.

[9] The two annual reports to date by the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration are A/57/270 and A/58/323.

[10] Professor Mohammed Yunus, of the Grameen Bank, makes a distinction between what he calls, "social private sector" (such as the microcredit institutions that operate as part of the private sector but contribute to social objectives only) and the "profit private sector" that operates for profit, but contributes to economic growth as well. The civil society organizations are interest groups that promote social issues on behalf of the citizens.

[11] See A/56/326.

[12] In his paper, "Innovations in governance and public administration for poverty reduction in post-conflict countries in a globalized world" (with emphasis on the experience of Rwanda), Musoni Protais described how a long-term strategic partnership forged between a donor agency (United Kingdom), the Government, civil society organizations and the private sector is helping Rwanda to move out of its conflict situation and gradually move forward to implementing long-term development activities.

[13] Many civil society institutions recognize this weakness and are taking initiatives to overcome these difficulties. Recently, at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Government of Sri Lanka interregional workshop on engaged governance: South/South cooperation for pro-poor policies (Colombo, 9-11 December 2003), the South African delegate from the National Labour and Economic Development Institute explained how his Institute had introduced the "People budget" concept and how they had developed a simple manual for ordinary people to help them understand and analyse the budget and give feedback to the Government.

[14] See "Participation in poverty reduction strategy papers", World Bank, January 2002, especially report one, which deals with the external assessments of participation in poverty reduction strategy papers.

[15] DESA is spearheading the new concept of "engaged governance" as tool of good governance (engaged governance goes beyond partnership), important for pursuing pro-poor policies and strategies. Conceptually, engaged governance is defined as an approach that enables the expression and coordination of political, administrative and civic interests for the achievement of policy coherence, social justice and sustainable human development. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Government of Sri Lanka and the Sri Lanka Evaluation Association, conducted the interregional workshop on engaged governance: South/South cooperation for pro-poor policies, in Colombo on 9-11 December 2003. The workshop discussed the conceptual as well as the operational aspects of engaged governance and highlighted several case examples. A publication highlighting the outcome of the workshop will soon be produced.

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Revitalizing public administration

Developing institutions of governance and public administration in Africa

Report of the Secretariat

Summary

"Africa faces grave challenges and the most urgent of these are eradication of poverty and the fostering of socio-economic development, in particular, through democracy and good governance."

New Partnership for Africa's Development, Declaration on democracy, political, economic and corporate governance, Durban, South Africa, July 2002

Africa also faces a number of other challenges which must be overcome in order to achieve poverty eradication and socio-economic development. These challenges, as expressed in the above declaration adopted by the African heads of State meeting in Durban, South Africa, as well as in long-term strategic vision documents of many countries in Africa, include the following: enforcing the rule of law; ensuring equity and equality, equal opportunity and individual freedoms for all citizens before the law; practising just, honest, transparent, accountable and participatory government and probity in public life; combating corruption, which both retards economic development and undermines the moral fabric of society; restoring stability, peace and security, including building capacity to prevent, manage and resolve all conflicts; ensuring respect for human rights, including protection of the vulnerable, ethnic minorities, women and children; and promoting gender equality to tap the potential of women. The magnitude and complexity of the challenges require the adoption of sound governance and public administration institutions and practices.

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This will entail strengthening institutions of governance and public administration at the national level, including: redefining the mission of the State and grounding governance and public administration in local conditions; developing, strengthening and popularizing national constitutions and constitutionalism as agreed foundations for good governance and public administration within the rule of law; participatory design of comprehensive nation-wide programmes for strengthening governance; strengthening public sector institutions (legislative institutions, the judiciary, the civil service); adopting institutions in the public service that ensure partnerships, adaptability, citizen-orientation and information-sharing; strengthening institutions of participatory democracy and local governance; and harmonizing traditional and modern institutions of public administration.

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Developing institutions of governance and public administration in Africa

I. Introduction

1. Africa needs to respond adequately to the challenges confronting it on the socio-political and economic fronts. There is growing consensus on the African continent that in order for this to happen, Africa must strengthen its governance and public administration institutions. The size and complexity of the challenges require the adoption of sound governance and public administration practices, practices which are only possible within the context of viable institutions. The present report is structured around four basic conceptual premises:

(a) The development of institutions is always driven by purpose and by contextual concerns. This should be the same in the case of developing governance and public administration institutions in Africa at local, national, regional and continental levels. The overriding purpose for developing governance and public administration institutions must be to establish and/or nurture institutions to enable them to support the development process and to meet the challenges confronting the continent and its people. Therefore, in the case of Africa, revitalizing governance and public administration through developing its institutions entails not only strengthening the institutions that already exist, but also remodelling them and searching for and developing new forms that fit the unique situations of each country or region's historical, cultural and political reality in a way that can support the realization of the development aspirations of the people. Such aspirations may be expressed in national development plans, regional strategic development visions, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), or even global goals such as the Millennium Development Goals;

(b) Institutions play a critical dual role, first in facilitating the articulation of a country's or region's development objectives and aspirations, and then in translating them into action. Thus whether it is for strategic thinking/visioning and long-term policy-making or for actual implementation or evaluation and control, the existence and capabilities of institutions for crystallizing and guiding collective efforts is the critical centre, without which little can be achieved;

(c) The significance of institutions lies in their attributes, the essential ones being: focus on the mandates, missions and objectives to be accomplished, as well as the wider and deeper challenges to be overcome; the structures that identify groups and individuals in the institution by their roles and responsibilities as well as by the degree of authority vested in each office; the system of rules governing the behaviour of the formal organization as well as that of the groups and individuals operating within it; the culture and "traditions" that underpin or rationalize the behaviour of the institution and its constituent parts;

(d) In a development context, where the only desirable constant is positive change, institutions develop in response to their perpetual struggle to maintain a balance between the pressures for change and the need for stability.

2. The present report explores the challenges facing the African continent that require responses related to developing institutions of governance and public administration at continental, regional, national and local levels. It delineates factors

that could support the durability, sustainability, resilience and strategic visioning/innovative strength, goal-attainment capacity as well as change orientation of governance and public administration institutions in Africa and makes suggestions and recommendations that could contribute to more favourable development of the institutions on the continent.

II. Socio-politico-economic challenges in Africa that require responses of an institutional nature

3. Whether governance and public administration institutions will strengthen or weaken depends on a combination of factors, including: (a) the degree of consensus on the underlying values and purpose of the institutions and the challenges to be overcome; (b) the level of political commitment to their values and their original purpose; (c) to what degree the institutions (including their purposes, operating structures and rules) are perceived by those associated with them as legitimate and deserving of the collectivity's allegiance; (d) the capability of the institutions to balance the forces of modernity and those of tradition (modernity/tradition ratio); (e) the ability of the institutions to adapt to change, as well as their receptivity to new ideas and managing diversity; (f) the extent to which the institutions are dependable in coordinating the resolution of possible conflict.

4. Given the above, any efforts to develop institutions of governance and public administration in Africa must be based on a clear and agreed understanding of the challenges that such institutions are intended to overcome. The first consensus that must be reached should be on those challenges facing the continent that require a response by way of institutional development in the area of governance and public administration. The overarching challenge in Africa is how to ensure that the continent and its people are put firmly on an irreversible path to poverty eradication and sustainable economic and human development.

5. This challenge is linked to a number of other challenges that must be overcome as means and landmarks in pursuing the objective of poverty eradication and socio-economic development for the entire continent. Most of these challenges are expressed in the declaration adopted by the African heads of State at their meeting in Durban, South Africa, entitled "Declaration on democracy, political, economic and corporate governance", as well as in long-term strategic vision documents of many countries in Africa.[1] They include the following challenges, which are related to practising democracy and good political governance:

- Enforcing, on a sustainable basis, the rule of law
- Ensuring equity and equality of all citizens before the law and individual liberty, equal opportunity for all as well as collective freedoms
- Practising just, honest, transparent, accountable and participatory government and probity in public life
- Combating corruption, which both retards economic development and undermines the moral fabric of society
- Restoring stability, peace and security, including building capacity to prevent, manage and resolve all conflicts

- Ensuring respect for human rights, including protection of the vulnerable, ethnic minorities, women and children
- Promoting gender equality to tap the potential of women to participate on an equal footing with men in socio-politico-economic development.

6. In addition to the above, there is the challenge of securing the commitment of political leadership and "follower-ship" at the continental, regional, national and local community levels to the same challenges identified in the above-mentioned declaration. Given that the raison d'être of institutions lies in their mandates, missions and objectives as well as the challenges for which they were established, efforts to support the development of institutions of governance and public administration in order that they may promote the struggle for poverty eradication and socio-economic development must begin by focusing on creating and sustaining consensus on the challenges. In Africa, at the continental level, consensus on the challenges has been progressively achieved at the level of leadership (heads of State) as provided in the above-quoted Declaration. In some of the countries the consensus has also been reached to some degree on the same issues. There must, however, be direct congruency between consensus at national, regional and continental levels. The consensus reached at continental level must be seen to reflect the will of the people at each country level.

III. Historical perspectives and trends of governance and the institutional development of public administration in Africa

7. A search for appropriate strategies for developing institutions of governance and public administration in Africa should start from an accurate understanding of the historical perspectives of institutional development on the continent. It is understood that the problem of governance and the institutional development of public administration in Africa concerns both inadequacy and absence. On one hand, the existing institutions have within them weaknesses that must be corrected in the process of developing their capacities. On the other hand, there are areas where institutions do not exist, or exist in inadequate numbers, thereby calling for institutional creation as part of capacity-building. This is generally so in the case of institutions that would create strong collaborative and participatory linkages among government, civil society, the private sector and the citizenry in the areas of governance and public administration.

8. Developing institutions of governance and public administration is fairly complex. First, governance[2] is a concept that is wider than (but which includes) public administration. Taking this into account, there is need to guard against considering only institutions of government. The discussion must include institutions that facilitate collaboration, involvement, consultation and participation of all stakeholders in all sectors (public sector, private sector and civil society) in the act of governance. Second, institutions are social constructs that encompass not only temporal structurally conditioned behaviour but also tendencies that are products of the socio-politico-economic and historical conditions of the context in which they operate. In this case, discussing institutional development in Africa must be done in a way that permits examination not only of the historical conditions that shaped them, which may offer some explanation as to their strengths or weakness, but also of future perspectives, which create imperatives and directions for

developing appropriate institutions to lead African countries into the twenty-first century. Lastly, there is need to guard against the temptation to write about governance and public administration institutions in Africa as if Africa was one homogeneous entity. The reality is that institutional development in the various countries of Africa is at different stages, and this must be taken into account, especially when looking at institutions at the national and local levels. Institutions of democracy, such as political parties for example, are not developed at the same level in South Africa as they are in the democratic Republic of the Congo. While developing governance and public administration at the continental level (African Union (AU)) may be looked at as one solid homogenous endeavour, at the national level it requires a case-by-case analysis.

9. The genesis of public administration in the majority of African countries lies in the colonization of the continent. In pointing this out, the report presents it as a historical fact, without seeking to engage in whether it was wrong or right, fair or unfair. Basically, under colonialism, sufficient bureaucratic structures of administration were established in order to enable the system to accomplish its mission of ensuring orderly governance to carry out resource exploitation:

> "Colonialism, to a great extent, supplanted or suppressed the various traditional administrative organizations, and with them their administrative cultural values. In most parts of Africa, the traditional administrative organizations were done away with and replaced by bureaucratic organizations styled after the system in the mother country. In this the civilizing mission of the colonial masters had limited scope; it was mainly concerned with pacifying the natives for purposes of facilitating exploitation of natural resources. As such, little investment was put into the development of complicated administrative infrastructures; the administrative systems consisted of skeletal organizations, only large enough for the purposes of extracting revenues and ensuring orderly governance."[3]

10. Colonization imposed legal, political and administrative institutions and systems alien to the existing African local realities. After independence, most African countries did not have stable political administrative institutions. Contradictions between liberalized politics (for example, multiparty politics immediately after independence) and socialist policies culminated in single-party authoritarian regimes relying heavily on "strong men". Later many of these regimes were toppled by military coups, further consolidating the culture of strong personalities as the basis for the exercise of power and public authority. Institutions promoting representation, consultation, involvement and participation of the people in governance and public administration did not have room to grow. This is the reason behind the call for a second liberation in Africa. In some African countries second liberation struggles have had a degree of success, but in others various groups are still engaged in power struggles, which have given rise to violent conflicts on the continent.

11. At the national level, in many African countries, as a result of the personalization of power and the neo-patrimonial nature of the State, the tendency has been towards institutional decay rather than development. By definition, a neo-patrimonial system develops when political actors do not recognize the State as an institution and the power to rule resides in a person rather than an office. There is little division between public and private spheres, since they both largely coincide in

one person, the dictator. Thus, there are no formal mechanisms of competition or participation. Rather, politics is practised as a zero-sum game with a winner-take-all, something that perpetuates violent conflict and power struggles.

12. There have been prior attempts to remedy the situation, although most of these attempts have tended to overconcentrate on building the capacity of public administration as an instrument of State action without paying attention to the wider issues of governance that determine the effectiveness of public administration in the first place.

> "It has been rightly said that, for Africa as a whole, the 1950s and 1960s were years of political and economic advances, the 1970s years of relative stagnation, and the 1980s were years of decline or the 'lost decade'. The 1990s have been a mixed bag (Kiggundu, 2000). Gains in Uganda, Ghana, South Africa and Mozambique were largely offset by losses in the form of civil wars, human rights abuses and state disintegration in Somalia, Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and the Congos".[4]

13. The *World Public Sector Report 2001*, published by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, points out that the "unparalleled severity of these repeated crises has served both to highlight the pressing need for action in public service reform, and to illustrate the perils of hastily conceived and poorly executed blanket solutions which, far from being a cure, quite often, on the contrary, aggravated the disease. Such were the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) pursued by lending international institutions during the 1980s, in an attempt to address the problems generated by the global recession, low commodity prices and the ensuing indebtedness of several African nations".[5] These reforms further weakened State institutions that were already fragile. It should be emphasized that the main fault of such measures resided in not paying attention to strengthening institutions of governance. It was wrong to have assumed that it is possible to have effective public administration within the context of poor governance.

14. The historical significance of this is that strengthening public administration in Africa would now entail, first and foremost, indigenizing its institutions, not only in terms of their missions and objectives, but also their behaviour and responsiveness to the needs of the continent and its people. In addition, public administration must be considered within the context of strengthening governance institutions that promote and support people participation.

IV. Strengthening institutions of governance and public administration at the national level

15. Africa, in its current effort to redefine itself and shape a place for itself in the globalized world, must start by looking at the entire spectrum of governance rather than at the narrow realm of public administration. It must be recognized that public administration cannot be strengthened within the context of decaying governance. African countries must admit that, in order to revitalize governance and public administration on the continent, there has to be a process through which basic questions are asked and answered: (a) if revitalization means bringing back to active life, what point in the history of modern States in Africa can be taken by Africans as a moment of glory in governance and public administration to be used as a model

for the revitalization of their institutions? and (b) which institutional set-up in the traditional governance of the countries of the continent can be revived and integrated in the efforts to strengthen governance and public administration?

A. Redefining the missions of State, grounding governance and public administration in local conditions

16. It must be reiterated that the beginning point in strengthening governance and public administration institutions is to specify and agree upon their mandates, missions and objectives, as well as the challenges they are intended to address. The aspirations of the entire country, in terms of socio-politico-economic development and the challenges that stand in the way of the attainment of these aspirations, must be analysed, diagnosed, discussed and agreed through consultations and participation of a cross section of the population. At the same time, the sharing of responsibilities and means of collaboration and participatory action among all sectors (public, private and civil society sectors) must be determined. In this way, the missions of the State will be redefined, understood and agreed upon by all actors. When the redefinition of missions is done in a participatory way, involving all sectors, chances become greater for each governance actor to know what the others are doing and how collaboration should be approached.

B. Developing, strengthening and popularizing national constitutions and constitutionalism as agreed foundations for good governance and public administration within the rule of law

17. One of the elements of governance and public administration that have characterized most African countries since independence are fragile and unstable constitutional arrangements and unconstitutional practices in the conduct of national leadership and management of public affairs. There is a need to explore the explanations for this fragility and instability in national constitutions. The explanation may reside in their structures and provisions or in the weaknesses of institutions that are expected to ensure respect for the constitutions. It may also reside in the behaviour and attitudes of political leaders concerning constitutionalism. National constitutions that galvanize consensus over major issues of national socio-politico-economic interests are critical to the survival of any institutional arrangements that may be put in place. Constitutions are also the basic springboards for the practice of the rule of law. Institutional capacity and competencies must be developed in the management and operation of national democratic institutions, including national assemblies, the judiciary and the executive branch. However, the first strategy for strengthening the institutional foundations of good governance in Africa is greater appreciation and acceptance of the philosophical and legal foundations of the rule of law, both by the rulers and the people. The State needs to be seen not as a network of relations built around a strongman, but as a set of functions to be performed in a neutral and objective way.

18. There are a number of ways to create a national constitution, depending upon the particularities of a given country and the aspirations of its people. It is difficult to pinpoint one particular way of making a national constitution that can ensure durability and stability. Recent experiences in Africa (for example, South Africa,

Uganda, Ethiopia and Rwanda) show that when a constitution is made through consultative, participatory and inclusive methods, which bring together all the socio-politico-economic forces of the country and consolidate agreement on the rules of the game, putting the interests of the people at the centre of everything, the resulting constitution is more likely to be durable. The significance of this is that institutional development starts with constitutional foundations that provide for the existence of these institutions. We need to distinguish constitutions, which are legal texts that provide institutional arrangements and rules of the game, from constitutionalism, which is the behavioural and practical aspect of conducting public affairs following and respecting the provisions of the constitution. The problem regarding constitutions in many African countries is not so much of absence of national constitutions but rather disrespect for their provisions.

19. In the light of the failure of many Governments, national convening processes to elicit the aspirations of the citizenry, followed by arduous constitutional formation and reformulation processes are being undertaken in many countries to adapt to new more appropriate forms of government. This approach is generally required in the process of creating national constitutions because constitutions are not only long-term strategic national outlooks but are also perennial in nature.

20. Mechanisms that express the agreed articulation of citizens' interests (that is, a system of political parties) and indicate how to develop a culture of pluralism, as well as provisions that create adequate checks and balances among the legislative, executive, and judiciary branches of government, need to be enshrined in national constitutions. One of the problems Africa has been facing is that of "one strong man" regimes that have stifled participatory democracy.

C. Participatory design of comprehensive nationwide programmes for strengthening governance

21. One of the pitfalls in the efforts of African countries to build the capacity of the public sector has been the piecemeal approach, which has produced uncoordinated and uncollaborated action and very little in terms of the desired institutional strengthening. At the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, this issue was discussed and the following conclusion reached:

> "Any meaningful public administration effort should emanate from and be an integral part of a nation-wide programme for promoting and strengthening good governance, peace and stability. Despite this, many least developed countries still use uncoordinated rule application systems and ineffective welfare structures that stifle the private sector and civil society. The development performance in the least developed countries will not improve if their Governments are reluctant to re-examine and redefine the role of public administration and how it relates to private sector, civil society and global actors — not only in development but also in the delivery of services and maintenance of stability."[6]

22. It is important to distinguish the type of participatory analysis, diagnosis and planning of governance and public administration that is being proposed in the present report from the centralized development planning characteristic of African countries in the years following independence. The failure of the national

development plans formulated in the 1960s and 1970s to deliver on their promises can be attributed largely to the gap between the lofty economic growth ambitions of the modernizing elite and the basic survival concerns of the vast majority of their followers. The assumed monopoly of knowledge of local needs, challenges and means to meet them on the part of the bureaucratic elite and their single party adherents led to the exclusion of the local population from the process of planning how to determine their socio-politico-economic development. The current growth of civil society demands for full participation in the analysis of problems and the plans for addressing those problems calls for a participatory approach to planning. The need for participation and consultation is already provided for in article 9 of the Charter of the Public Service in Africa:

> "It shall be the responsibility of the administration to ensure that the mechanisms of participation and consultation involving civil society and other stakeholders are effectively put in place through consultative forums and advisory bodies."

23. Moving African States towards "smart governments" will require adopting consultative processes in articulating national long-term vision and strategic frameworks for development. It will require instituting inclusive participatory decision-making practices to ensure re-alignment between what Governments do and what the people aspire to.

V. Strengthening public sector institutions

A. Legislative institutions

24. The functions of the legislature include representation of the people, law-making, and oversight of the executive. For this reason, the legislature is a very critical institution in representative democracy, defending the interests of the people, making just laws to provide a basis for the rule of law and ensuring accountability of the executive, especially in the way it deploys public resources, power and authority. Experience in most African countries shows that in many countries the legislature has suffered under an over-blown executive branch, especially its coercive wing (the military). One of the institutions that, therefore, needs to be revamped and strengthened is the legislature in order that African people may be brought back into the arena of governance and public administration. Some of the measures that could be taken to strengthen the legislatures include:

(a) Enshrining the nature and functions of the legislature in the national constitution, providing adequate power and authority to the legislature, giving it sufficient constitutional legitimacy and clout to control the excesses of the executive branch;

(b) Establishing good working methods for the Parliament and its sub-units, including management of time, legislative agenda and disciplinary rules;

(c) Enhancing the legislative and management skills of legislatures and their aides, including skills for drafting legislation, investigative techniques for committee work and appropriate knowledge of the budget and budgetary process;

(d) Structuring or re-structuring the organizational set-up of parliamentary committees and building their capacity for process skills, such as negotiation and mediation, in order to improve their effectiveness;

(e) Developing greater awareness of the work and significance of the legislature among the public by, for example, broadcasting parliamentary sessions on national radio and television, keeping most of the legislative and committee sessions open to the public and providing formal and informal education on the role and importance of the legislative branch;

(f) Strengthening the outreach and communication of legislators with their constituencies via the establishment of local, staffed constituency offices, the use of information and communication technologies for conveying opinions, as well as organizing other interactions with legislators, such as town meetings in their districts and participation in other forums;

(g) With efforts of regionalization and regional integration (especially the establishment of the African Parliament), national legislatures need to be linked to regional and continental legislatures so that there is no contradiction between the legislatures at different levels and the principle of subsidiarity is respected.

B. Strengthening the judiciary

25. Reforms to build an independent and effective judiciary are critical to ensuring the rule of law, building a working system of checks and balances to guarantee fundamental rights and solving disputes among different levels of government as well as various socio-politico-economic actors. Whether it is in promoting respect for human rights, promotion of investment or in the protection of life and property, an independent and competent judiciary is indispensable. One of the factors contributing to the inability of African countries to attract either local or foreign investment is the inadequacy of judicial systems to provide frameworks and predictable dispute resolution mechanisms through which investors can be assured of the security of their investments. The processes and practices of a judicial system must be made relevant and understandable within the environment it serves, and must also be accessible to all, including the poor. The following are some of the measures that need to be taken to strengthen the judiciary:

(a) Specific provisions for the training, recruitment, status and career of all judges and court officials should be clearly defined to guarantee that the judiciary is independent from interference either from political bodies or contending parties. In general, long-term appointments or lifetime tenure, merit-based promotions, adequate salaries and parity of esteem with other government officials are key to ensuring the independence of the judiciary as a public institution;

(b) Establishment or improvement of the operation and working modalities of the judicial system, including the introduction of alternative dispute resolution;

(c) Elaboration of a code of ethics with modalities for implementation, sanctions and awareness-raising among the judicial community as well as the public;

(d) Ensuring a satisfactory working environment, adequate infrastructure and building facilities;

(e) Introduction of information and communication technologies to facilitate working modalities and internal operations, especially concerning records;

(f) Establishing competent and corruption-free commercial courts that can settle business disputes expeditiously.

26. Within the current context of globalization and regional integration, systems and institutions of the judiciary must take into account international legal frameworks and laws so that dispute resolution mechanisms can operate on a level playing field.

C. Strengthening the civil service

27. One of the institutions that operationalize and sustain State action is the civil service. Governments all over the world have historically engaged in efforts to make their civil service institutions effective. African countries are no exception. The first requirement for effective institutions of the civil service has already been identified, acknowledged and enshrined in the Charter for the Public Service in Africa. This is the fact that the civil service should be strong, based on accepted principles of neutrality, legality and continuity, as well as on the fundamental values of professionalism, ethics, integrity and moral rectitude. These should form the institutional behavioural aspects of the civil service on the continent. African Governments and their development partners should work hand in hand to actualize the Charter for the Public Service in Africa as a way of strengthening the institutions of the civil service on the continent.

28. The civil service is critical to the development process, especially since it is at the centre of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the delivery of the critical public services such as health, education, agricultural extension, environment protection, which are themselves at the core of reducing poverty. In other words, countries that do not have an effective civil service are likely to lag behind in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

29. The civil service is an institution composed of sub-institutions. Therefore, in developing its capacity, it must be determined which sub-institutions need to be strengthened in which way. Some institutions are for coordination, others are for control, and yet others are operational. Systems and structures need to be devised and implemented following not only the way that ministries are differentiated, but also the way that they are coordinated to work together. It is difficult to prescribe one way of organizing government ministries, but whichever way is adopted, the functions should be conducted in a coordinated fashion, following the principles and values provided in the Charter for Public Service in Africa.

D. Adopting institutions in the public service that ensure adaptability, citizen-orientation, information-sharing and partnerships

30. Over the past years there has been a growing consensus that no single actor, private or public, has the capacity alone to solve the complex and diversified problems with which societies are now confronted. Just as the concept of the omnipotence of the State was erroneous, reality has proven that while the market has great potential, without solid institutions and regulations it is capable of generating

dangerous and far-reaching imbalances. Partnerships between the State, the private sector and civil society institutions have proven to be very important in both social service delivery and policy-making processes in many areas such as the protection of the environment, work conditions and social safety nets. Such success is predicated on building and maintaining an institutional framework open to diversity, which facilitates stakeholders' contributions to policy-making and evaluation processes. Although this is not always easy, evidence has shown that success in modern government depends largely on widening the basis of citizen participation and galvanizing consensus and support for broadly shared objectives.

E. Adaptability and citizen orientation

31. In order to foster a new relationship between civil servants and citizens, State institutions ought to be more open and flexible in the face of change, and, in particular, more accountable to the public at large. Greater attention is being given to developing a more service-oriented spirit among civil servants and to ensuring effective and transparent mechanisms for citizens to channel their complaints concerning poor, inefficient or denied access to public services. Flexible structures and processes are now favoured over the more traditional and bureaucratic patterns. This is important because the ability of Governments to include and synergize, as well as their disposition to listen and respond, are almost universally accepted as an important source of policy legitimacy.

F. Information-sharing

32. An important mechanism to promote the development of public administration institutions that operate in an open, transparent and efficient way, including in the area of public services, is for countries to share best practices, knowledge and information on successful experiences in public administration reform, including experience in the area of public service delivery. Information sharing and South-South cooperation is a powerful tool to foster good governance and development. In this respect, General Assembly resolution 50/225 on public administration and development underlined the importance of enhancing international cooperation in the field of public administration, including South-South and interregional cooperation. Furthermore, General Assembly resolution 57/277 recommended that particular emphasis be devoted to the exchange of experience.

VI. Strengthening institutions of participatory democracy and local governance

33. One of the problems confronting African countries concerns how to put structures in place that promote and support the participation of the people in determining the direction and content of their socio-politico-economic development. While the introduction of participatory democracy is not in question for many of the countries, the issue of how to actualize it is still not settled. One of the measures being implemented by some countries in this regard is decentralized governance. In general, decentralization is being implemented to ensure political, economic, social, managerial/administrative and technical empowerment of local populations to fight

poverty by participating in planning and management of their development process. The major objectives would be:

(a) To enable and reactivate local people to participate in initiating, making, implementing and monitoring decisions and plans that concern them, taking into consideration their local needs, priorities, capacities and resources by transferring power, authority and resources from central to local government and lower levels;

(b) To strengthen accountability and transparency by making local leaders directly accountable to the communities they serve and by establishing a clear linkage between the taxes people pay and the services that are financed by these taxes;

(c) To enhance the sensitivity and responsiveness of public administration to the local environment by placing the planning, financing, management and control of service provision at the point where services are provided and by enabling local leadership to develop organizational structures and capacities that take into consideration the local environment and needs;

(d) To develop sustainable economic planning and management capacity at local levels that will serve as the driving motor for planning, mobilization and implementation of social, political and economic development;

(e) To enhance effectiveness and efficiency in the planning, monitoring and delivery of services by reducing the burden from central government officials, who are distanced from the point where needs are felt and services delivered.

34. Countries that have introduced strong doses of local governance are taking decentralization as an instrument for people's political empowerment, a platform for sustainable democratization and a structural arrangement for mobilization of economic development energies, initiatives and resources. It is hoped that through decentralization efforts, institutions will evolve that are not only democratic, accountable and transparent but also efficient and effective in service provision and community development.

35. Institutions that need to be strengthened at the local level in this sense are local councils, local executives and civil service structures, as well as structures that ensure collaboration, involvement and engagement of local actors (socio-politico-economic) in the management of public affairs at local levels. In addition, institutions that ensure coordination between the central government and local governments need to be established/strengthened.

VII. Harmonizing traditional and modern institutions of public administration

36. All African countries have a strong and rich history of traditional leaders and institutions. They have evolved differently over time due to their diverse historical legacies, diverse adaptation to internal and external pressures, differing interactions and relationships with the colonizing Power and different relationships developed with new governments after independence. While each part of Africa and, indeed, each part of each country has evolved in a unique way in this respect, generally speaking, traditional leadership and traditional institutions coexist in an uneasy equilibrium with the modern institutions of the State. Accommodating the two in

terms of defining their respective spheres of authority, delineating responsibility and competency in traditional spheres, such as family, marriage, land and certain criminal and civil matters, remains in many instances incomplete and needs to be worked out in each specific context. What should be the role of traditional institutions in the practice of modern governance and public administration in a world that is increasingly globalized? This should be a question to be answered by Africans themselves after careful study, discussion and agreement as to which traditional institutions need to be kept intact, redefined or discouraged. What role these traditional institutions can play in governance and development and how they can relate to the other institutions has to be clearly sorted out.

37. There are examples where African countries have adopted traditional institutions to the needs of modern public administration with some success. Uganda reintroduced kingdoms and traditional leadership institutions but conferred on them missions related to economic development and cultural development. Rwanda introduced the "*gacaca*" courts to meet challenges brought about by the genocide of 1994. It is hoped that the "*gacaca*" courts, which are traditionally more understood by the common man and woman, will not only enable the State to expedite the handling of some genocide-related cases but also facilitate reconciliation at the grass-roots level. South Africa has been engaged in efforts to establish a clear policy to guide the integration of traditional leaders in the governance of the country.

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

38. **African countries have engaged in far-reaching commitments at the national, regional and global levels. At national levels, although a number of countries are still bogged down by conflict, violence and unstable regimes, many have made and adopted long-term visions for the effective development of their people. At the regional level, the Africa Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) represent renewed hope for a more favourable place in the global arena of development in the twenty-first century. At the global level, African countries joined the rest of the world in adopting the Millennium Development Goals. These commitments cannot be achieved on the African continent if the Governments do not strengthen the institutions of governance and public administration to make them effective in championing the requisite strategic actions for translating the commitments into outcomes. Institutions of governance and public administration are supposed to exist for serving the public. They stand a chance of doing this when they ensure the participation of the very people they are set to serve. The present report has emphasized the critical necessity of strengthening institutions of governance and public administration in the African countries. Below are specific recommendations to the Governments of African countries, to the United Nations Secretariat and to the Economic and Social Council:**

Recommendations

Recommendations to the Governments of African countries:

- **Adopt and implement the governance and public administration programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development**

- **Implement the Charter for the Public Service in Africa**
- **Adopt methods, processes, systems and procedures of work (planning, monitoring, evaluation) that involve and engage the people**
- **Strengthen the legislatures, including the Africa Parliament, to enhance the checks and balances that are necessary for the development of democratic governance and the rule of law on the African continent**
- **Depoliticize the public service to make it more neutral, permanent and professional**
- **Strengthen the judiciary to ensure predictability and peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes, especially in matters of industry, commerce and international business.**

Recommendations to the Secretariat of the United Nations:

- **Continue to provide substantive technical and advisory support to African States on request so that they can strengthen the institutions of the public service, including those at regional levels**
- **Enhance the provision of technical and advisory support to the NEPAD secretariat to implement the Africa Governance and Public Administration adopted by the Pan-African Meeting of Ministers in Cape Town, South Africa, in May 2003**
- **Provide technical and advisory support to African Governments to enable them to implement the Charter for the Public Service in Africa**
- **Support governance and public administration research in African countries that would help to articulate the relevancy and application of traditional institutions and practices to public administration within the context of globalization and regional integration.**

Recommendations to the Economic and Social Council:

The Economic and Social Council may wish to recommend that Member States increase financial, material and technical support to African countries to strengthen institutions of governance and public administration at national and regional levels.

Notes

[1] For example, Rwanda and Uganda.

[2] As an act of steering a people's socio-politico-economic development, governance is a multifaceted compound situation of institutions, systems, structures, processes, procedures, practices, relationships and leadership behaviour in the exercise of social, political, economic and managerial/administrative authority in the running of public or private affairs. Good governance is the exercise of this authority with the participation, interest and livelihood of the governed as the driving force (quoted from Kauzya, John-Mary, "Local Governance Capacity-Building for Full-Range Participation: Concepts, Frameworks and Experiences in African Countries", Global Forum on Re-inventing Government, Marrakesh, Morocco, December 2002).

[3] G. R. Mutahaba, R. Baguma and M. S. Halfani, *Vitalizing African Public Administration for Recovery and Development*, with the United Nations, Kumarian Press, 1994 (published in cooperation with the United Nations).

[4] See United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.II.H.2, Department of Economic and Social Affairs: *World Public Sector Report 2001: Globalization and the State*, New York, 2001, p. 47.

[5] Ibid., p. 48.

[6] Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Session on Governance, Peace and Social Stability, 14 May 2001.